The Epic Tale of the Forsaken Hero

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Forsaken hero

- Story 1 -

Dungeon – Rigal's Den

Chapter 1 - “Summons from a God of Another World”

Oginomiya Academy. This is the school I go to; saying it’s the place of my execution isn’t an exaggeration either.

Violence and slander could be noticed everyday.

I didn’t feel any pain. I didn’t feel any fun.

But, I can’t escape.

This is a boarding school so you can only go back home during the long holidays.

If you tried to be a shut-in, the teachers will drag you back and you’ll be branded with new names.

That’s why I endured the bullying.

“Oi, get up you pig!”

“Gah!?”

A thick smacking sound echoed. A blow from below struck me in the stomach.

I fell down on my knees.

“Don’t kick the bucket yet! Here!”

“Agh!!”

A heel kick aimed at my neck. Pain as if my neck was going to break ran through me.

Now I certainly fell on the spot.

“Look, you’re kissing dirt! Fitting for you!”

“Gu…”

My head is being stomped on. Every time, it’s the same pattern.

What am I supposed to say?

Why do I have to go through all of this everytime?

“Eww, he’s disgusting!”

“Really! I don’t want to breathe the same air as him!”

“It would be great if he’d disappear, really!”

I can hear insults towards me from here and there in the classroom.

It’s not like I want to be here, dammit.

“Well, calm down, Katsuragi. We’ll make sure to be your dust cloth in your place.”

While wiping my face back and forth on the floor, Samejima Shinji, the “leader” of the class, said.

He’s an honor student with good looks, grades and athletic ability. Moreover, he’s the board chairman’s grandson.

That why, anything he does is OK. They even look away from him bullying me.

Samejima's pretty black-hearted. He'll erase anything he doesn't like. He'll try to get anything he likes at any costs.

He's the embodiment of such crap.

The one who punched me before was Kijima Takeshi. The one who kicked me was Umahara Keito.

They stick to Samejima like small animals. They're just like live sharksuckers.

"Well then, what should we do next?"

As Samejima listens to the requests of the classmates behind him, he parts his legs.

And it was then, when it suddenly happened.

"Wha-"

"Kya!?"

"Whoa!"

A light that grasped the whole class blinded our eyesight, and then the earth shook with a sound of an explosion.

It felt as if our bodies were floating.

"Where… is this place?"
As our eyes timidly opened, what we saw was a place we didn't know.

It was white. Everything was white.

There were no tables or chairs or the blackboard. Everything was blank.

“O-oi! Where is this place!”

“What the hell just happened?!”

The others stirred a commotion. I didn’t say anything.

I was able to escape the pain for a moment. If I were to speak, surely, I would be answered with more violence.

There were people who started crying, some started to call out the names of their families.

There were also idiots calling it a dream.

It couldn’t be a dream. I haven’t heard of a dream which thirty people are having it at the same time.

Nonetheless, it is certain that we know nothing of our predicament.

I’ve never heard any place like this on Earth.

A world without flora, fauna and anything but us.

It’s as if someone called for a hero from another world in a book.

That’s what I thought. And that when it happened.

“Please settle down, heroes.”

It was a beautiful voice that made everything transparent.

The owner of the voice suddenly appeared in front of our eyes.

Golden locks that ran down to her waist. Charming scarlet eyes that would suck you in.

A large curve described her chest area, and slender stretched-out legs below her hips.

The guys had their eyes nailed on her.

To that, the girls looked at the guys with a cold look.

Wait, moreover, what did that person say?

My name is Claria, the goddess that called upon you heroes all here.

Goddess. Hero.

Just like this I, who knew some vague details, put together the pieces of the puzzle. I became closer to the truth of the situation.

There's no mistaking it. This is-

"I summoned you all from another world."

What the goddess replied was exactly as I thought.

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After the shock of what the goddess Claria said, she started to explain right after everyone had finally calmed down.

First of all, this is a divine plane where only gods are allowed to exist.

Then, why we were summoned to such an awesome place? Apparently the world she resides as a goddess in is being threatened by the revival of the evil demon lord and she wants us to take him down… I think.

The ones to defeat the demon lord. In other words, we're all "heroes".

"The more heroes the better", the goddess thought. She's probably correct.

However, we're just students. Suddenly telling us to defeat the demon lord is impossible.

-Which she also seems to understand.

"I will bestow you with a portion of my power. It is very powerful. Please, defeat the demon lord."

She deeply bowed her head.

Everyone was hesitant.

But of course, there's no reward for us.

I'm against it. I'm certain I would be risking my life fighting.

"Of course, I won't say it is without reward."

And yet, it's evident that everyone became off after listening to that.

"…Reward? What is it?"

Samejima, taking the leader role, asked.

"I shall grant each of one of you a single thing that you wish for."

"-!!"

The class' eyes all gathered at her.

"I-If we defeat the demon lord, all of us will-"

“Yes, of course.”

“Any wish?”

“Anything that you desire.”

After listening to that, Samejima’s attitude changed. I, who was always reluctant to get involved with him, knew.

That was-Someone who had eyes like a ferocious beast’s.

“…I understand.”

Samejima went towards Claria, and like a Western knight, kneeled down.

“We will defeat the demon lord. And then, bring peace to your world.”

“Wha-”

“Everyone, you’re with me, right!?”

When someone was about to complain, Samejima turned around.

Those evil eyes glared at the guy who was about to state his objection.

“…No, it’s nothing. I agree.”

If he would oppose, who knows what would happen.

Everyone turned to agree.

To add, I didn’t agree but I wouldn’t be counted anyway in the 29 responses.

Once again, Samejima turned towards Claria.

“This is what we believe. Please, give us the power to defeat the demon lord.”

To swear loyalty, Samejima lightly kissed the back of Claria’s hand.

It was repulsing.

However, Claria’s cheeks became reddish instead.

I didn’t know goddesses were that easy.

“I shall now send all of you to the imperial palace. There, please aid the king, as he will give you his support.

I have given everyone my power. Please do not use it in vain.

“Leave it to us. I shall defeat the demon lord with these hands.”

“Then, everyone. Please, save Rostalgia- the world that I dearly love.”

As Claria said that, the same light which brought us here enveloped us again.

And then, as I opened my eyes, this time we’re in some sort of high-class building.

A chandelier that you would only see on TV. A self-portrait on an entire wall. Stairs adorned by a red carpet.

I’m so shocked I can’t bring myself to utter anything.

A woman approached us.

Grabbing the hand of Samejima, who was at the front of the pack, she said:

“Heroes, please save our world, Rostalgia.”

There’s no chance of running.

And thus, our lives as heroes have started.

Chapter 2 - “Only I Get No Cheats”

It’s been a week since I’ve arrived at the imperial palace.

On the first day, Samejima was discussing the support we would get from the royal palace.

The information I’ve acquired is as follows:

The nation that this palace is in is called Ristonea. Aithin Rostalgia, it’s one of the more developed nations.

The king, Ginger, seems to be wiling to entirely support Samejima and the others without saying anything.

In the palace, the country’s most prominent masters of swordsmanship, magic and martial, were present there so as to train with us.

There seems to be a maid that would take care of everything in each of the private rooms.

And, this is the most important part.

I’m not included in that.

For whatever reason, it came down to the skill inspection that happened five days ago.

I can clearly remember what happened in detailed.

First of all, we were gathered in the palace's largest space. They were confirming our important statuses in battle.

Everyone looked confused and asked "Statuses? What's that?", in which Phage Stross, the Ristonea army commander, kindly told us,

If you were to say "Open" in Rostalgia, a window with your statuses would open up.

"Stamina" was self-explanatory. If it reached zero, you wouldn't die, but would pass out instead, being unable to move.

Passing out in a dungeon was pretty much the same thing as death, so we were warned to never have it reach zero.

"Magic" referred to the how much of the resource you spent when using magic.
The lesser it gets, the more weaker you become, so we have to be careful of not using it too much.

"Physical" meant our power. In duels, the one with more Physical would win.

"Resistance" referred to how much damage is reduced. The more you're used to pain the higher it is.

"Agility" dealt with how fast your actions were. The higher it is, the easier it is to dodge attacks.

As I thought it was just like a game, I checked my own status screen.

"Open!"

==========

Katsuragi Daichi Class: Hero Level 1

Stamina: 75

Magic: 20

Physical: 50

Endurance: 300

Agility: 10

Special Abilities: None

==========

…Huh? It doesn't really seem too strong…?

Didn't I get some power from Claria?

…No, maybe, this might actually be in the strong classes.

I mean, my endurance is abnormally high… Probably because I'm familiar with pain.

And just as I expected, that faint hope disappeared.

"That's amazing, Shinji!"

While breaking character, Phage happily shouted.

The statuses he saw were all high figures.

==========

Samejima Shinji Class: Hero Level 1

Stamina: 500

Magic:430

Physical: 480

Resistance: 300

Agility: 680

Special Abilities:
“Sacred Guidance”: Increased damage for Light-attribute magic
“Crisis Sense” 10% increase in Agility while an enemy is attacking

==========

Each of his statuses were five times more than mine.

Even more, he has actually gets special abilities.

I mean, i’m shocked my Endurance was up to par with his. I don’t have any strong points.

The others were also checked one at a time, and everyone else had a special ability.

Their statuses were comparable to Samejima’s. Even the lowest of them was possessed stats much more that mine.

They were all definitely blessed by Claria. The fact Samejima’s was the highest confirms this.

I heard this later, but the common soldier has over 100 for all statuses.

Phage, the most capable soldier, has around 400 for each of his stats.

In any case, my fighting capabilities were even lower than a common soldier's.

I could use my Endurance and be a defense-oriented character. However, my Stamina is low, so it would quickly drop.

I'm useless.

Why is it only me?

Is it because I'm weak?

Because I'm disgusting?

It doesn't add up.

After that, my statuses were of course made public, and I was known as the "Talentless Hero" in the palace.

I was quickly abandoned by King Ginger. The other 29 were surely high-spec heroes, so they stayed.

They couldn't figure out any strong points about me.

My bed was a horse stable. I was left out of the classes of swordsmanship and magic and was made to self-study.

It's crazy. But, if I was to complain I would probably get kicked out. I wish I would be forgiven.

I was a weakling.

I can't do anything. I can't defeat anything. I can't win anything.

I didn't want that.

At least out of pity, they're taking me to the dungeon exploration this time, to decide if I would be of any use.

Then my life in this world would probably end.

I think anyone would have guessed.

That's why, for this week I desperately worked hard. More than I did before. I reduced my sleeping time to the very limits.

"98… 99… 100!"

I would swing my sword at least a hundred times in three sets per day, and went running.

"Burn, Fire Seed!"

I also practiced magic, to the point where I was able to produce a fire the size of a lighter.

The others were learning more effective and powerful magic. But if I lose any hope, it's over for me.

In retrospect, I want to praise myself for getting this far by myself. Good job, myself.

I was able to deceive myself that way.

I was able to slim down a bit. It was probably the results of having less food and the exercise.

However, my statuses haven't changed much.

My Physical and Stamina grown a little bit. Apparently just using magic won't bring up my Magic status.

Unfortunately, I couldn't bring up my Magic, as I didn't know the logic of this world.

It's something to do with my spirit, so if I have fun, will that do?

To test it out, for the entire day I kept smiling. Without thinking negatively, I kept on with the positive thinking.

Bystanders thought it was weird, but I kept going.

My Magic only increased by 1.

I promised myself to never do that ever again.

I tried every other method I could think of to increase the figures as much as I could.

–And, it finally became that day.

With Phage and six other soldiers, we went to Ristonea's toughest dungeon, "Rigal's Den".

Everyone went into the battle with confidence.

As if they were grade schoolers going on a field trip.

I have no idea why they were able to smile.

Even though I want to go back as soon as possible.

…At least let me be in a position where I can escape first, since I only increased my Endurance by 3.

As I went into the dungeon last, I followed the classmates in front of me.

I probably knew it well at that time;

About the cruel future I was about to fall into.

Chapter 3 - “Monster House”

“Rigal’s Den” was a dungeon for beginners.

There were many dungeons in this world, but this one, apparently, is the one everyone starts with.

There were a bunch of reasons for this; first of all the monsters that come out in here have low levels.

Second, the special monsters here, Rigals, give out a lot of experience.

The vanguard already started to fight.

“Spirits of the wind, blow everything away! Wind!”

Wind was produced by a female student’s magic, and stopped three of the Rigals’ advance.

A Rigal is a monster that looks like a scorpion that’s five times the size. It’s body was wrapped with a tough carapace, so physical attacks are ineffective.

However, it was weak to Fire-attribute magic.

Even the weakest Fire-attribute magic, Fireball, can defeat it.

Though I still can’t use it yet.

“Spirits of the flame, burn everything! Fireball!”

Samejima shot three Fireballs at the Rigals.

The monsters met an agonizing death in a blaze and disappeared into dust.

“I did it! I got to level 17!”

The female student who held back the Rigals with the Wind spell raised her arms in a triumphant pose.

That’s awesome. It could’ve been from being in the front lines for all this time.

By the way, I beat two big ant-looking demons and got to level 2.

For someone who can’t use magic, they were tough foes.

I got hit a bunch of times, so I was ordered by Phage to be sent to the back, as he said I was a “nuisance”.

I had little Stamina left.

I wished someone gave me some healing magic.

“I see, congrats. Good assist, Shuri.”

Samejima praised Shuri. This guy, even though he has that personality, is popular with the girls.

“Is that so~. Ehehe, thanks!”

The female student named Shuri had her cheeks turn red in delight.

“Ah, don’t be screwing around, guys. Don’t let your guard down.”

Breaking the sweet mood, Phage warned them.

“I know. So, Phage, there’s a flight of stairs there… Should we head down?”

While making a smile that he always fakes, Samejima points to the stairs at the far end.

The moment he listened to the suggestion, Phage suddenly looked sour.

“No can do. Beyond that is unmapped, unknown territory.”

The mapped area in Rigal’s Den for beginners is comparatively smaller than other dungeons.

After heading down fifty floors, it would be no problem to go to the next dungeon.

The country purposely thought out the places that aren’t too dangerous, so the current mapping was up to 50 floors only.

Knowing from the flow, we reached the 50th floor.

“Don’t worry we have this much people. Besides, our current power should be in the safe margin.”

“But, there are “what if’s” in this world. What will you do if there was a monster you couldn’t beat?”

“There aren’t. Isn’t this a dungeon for beginners? The monsters below could’ve come up to this floor.

However, there haven’t been any stronger monsters in the 50 floors we’ve been through, right?”

“That’s true, but…”

“It also got harder to level up, right? It’s fine, isn’t it? It’s to reduce the number of days under the suppression of the demon lord.”

Samejima said, pressing for an answer.

What he said was all true. There was logic in it.

It’s almost certain that the chance of him dying upon stepping into the 51st floor is pretty much zero.

However, Phage seems to have sensed some sort of danger.

Even asking “from what?”, he probably couldn’t answer. Maybe, it’s the intuition he got his’ experience.

However, Phage was troubled as to how to answer.

The time we spent worrying became fatal.

“It’s fine! Let’s go, Shinji!”

“Yeah wait up, Kou!”

“Ah, Samejima!”

“Hey, you guys! Dammit!”

That was the green light. People started descending from the 50th floor one by one.

“…Eh?”

I, who was left behind, spaced out.

I have no reason to follow those guys. Even if I went back first I would be treated the same anyway.

I shouldn't worry about it.

"Open."

==========
Katsuragi Daichi Class: Hero Level 2

Stamina: 18

Magic: 21

Physical: 58

Endurance: 305

Agility: 14

Special Abilities: None
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I immediately realized that escape was impossible.

"…Yeah, going back would be bad."

I hurried down the steps.

Dammit, you guys, you disappeared too quickly!"

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I, Samejima, arrived to the 51st floor, which nobody has ever stepped into.

Wondering what monsters would pop up, I'm getting excited.

Killing monsters is fun.

The more I kill, the stronger I get. Stronger than anyone else.

If anything doesn't go my way I won't be able to live with it.

Right now, I want Claria. There wasn't any woman like her.

Claria may be a god, but if I become a hero and beat the demon lord, she'll keep her promise and I'll make her mine.

Perhaps there's someone who has the same wish as I, but I'll leave that aside.

To get Claria.

I need "power" for that.

"Samejima! There's an Ariant in front of you!

"Got it."

I took the sword that bug was holding and sliced it.

Cutting it in half vertically, it disappeared after hitting the wall.

"There's been a lot of monsters attacking alone. I wonder why?"

Shuri, who had always been in the front lines, shook her head.

It was true that unlike the previous floors, the monsters that attacked alone increased.

"Should we care that they're all dying in vain by now?"

"…I guess. There's no loss."

“Yeah.”

Looks like Shuri agrees.

I could use her. She knows what I find favorable, so if I use that well I could add her into my group.

Shuri’s special skill can heal both Stamina and Magic, the “Saint’s Smile”. Being able to heal both statuses, it’s a valuable skill.

“Oi, Shinji! Doesn’t this door look suspicious!?”

And then there’s Kou, who can’t really take things in as well as Shuri, who stumbled upon a door with a geometric figure written on it.

“This is… It seems to be a magic circle. I haven’t seen it before.”

Phage, who was tailing behind, came up to the door and examined the magic circle on it.

A magic circle that a veteran soldier hasn’t seen… A new type of magic circle?

“Let’s open it!”

“…Yeah, I guess. Everyone, get prepared for battle.”

“Alright!”

As I give out the order, the classmates ready out their weapons.

Looks like Phage doesn’t want to say anything. He pulls out his blade.

I nodded to confirm what was inside. Using Kinoshima’s ability, “Super Strength”, the heavy looking door easily opened.

A heavy sound resonated.

What appeared behind was a broad space with nothing.

“What’s this place…?”

“Looks like there’s nothing…”

Everyone came inside in succession to take a look.

And then, in the middle of the room, something happened.

A high-pitched shriek echoed in the room. “Boo! Boo!”

When the screech stopped, a bright light shined through the ceiling.

“What’s this light!?”

Everyone looked up together.

The light slowly disappeared, and the ceiling was covered in darkness.

As they gradually dropped down, everyone’s eyes finally recovered to be able to see the figures.

“M-Monsters!! A group of monsters appeared!”

Everyone yelled at the beings.

A large group of Rigals dropped down. It wasn’t like the previous number. At this rate everyone will get eaten.

“Let’s quickly get out of here!”

“It’s no use! We’re surrounded!”

“What!?”

We didn’t know it as we were too preoccupied with the ceiling, but the wolves and Ariants surrounded us.

It’s just like a trap in a game that I have.

Ah, I’m pretty sure this is what they called it in the game.

“–A Monster House.”

Chapter 4 - “Unnecessary Bait”

“Spirits of water, become bullets that shoot the game! Splash Gatling!”

Bullets of water form midair. They drop on the Rigals.

The others around me do the same in succession; it cleaned up most of them but it cost us a lot of Magic.

Even so, there were monsters still surrounding us.

“Dammit! There are too many!”

“Everyone! Calm down!”

“Hurry up and shoot more magic! We’re making a path to the exit!”

Shouts fly about the room.

The monsters and classmates became jumbled up together.

We triggered the Monster House, and caused our group to panic.

“Those nearby the entrance, open up a way! Do whatever it takes!”

“Spirits of the flame, Burn our enemies to ashes! Burning Wave!”

“Spirits of the wind! Cut us a path! Sonic Wave!”

The students near the entrance listened to my orders and started casting their strongest magic spells one by one.

Waves of fire and wind burn and slice through the Rigals, becoming light.

However, a wolf leaped and dodged the attack.

“Wha- Phage! What is that thing!?”

“It’s a High Wolf! It’s smart and strong! Be wary of its speed! That guy shouldn’t be in this dungeon!”

Listening to Phage’s advice, I focused my senses on the High Wolf.

The wolf snapped forth with its sharp teeth. I rolled to the side and quickly stood back up.

“Tch…!”

“Grrrrrr”

We glared at each other, unable to move.

Moreover, I finally figured out a way out of this place.

“You guys! Fire some light at me! Escape to the stairs after that! Got it?!”

The battle’s become so intense, I didn’t know if my orders reached anyone. But, I can’t just do nothing.

Because, my own life is precious too!

“Oh sacred light! Shine the sun’s light upon those shrouded by darkness! Shining!!”

Tossing up my right hand, the magic stored in a ball flew up into the sky.

A divine light, along with the sound of an explosion, covered the room. As the monsters howled in pain, I promptly ran to the stairs past the entrance.

Everyone else also did the same. However, the High Wolf caught a girl.

“Help! Somebody help!”

Nobody looked back at the girl’s pleads, thinking only about protecting himself or herself.

“Ah, Shuri!”

“Oi, Shuri! …Tch!”

Shuri, who was running beside me stopped and turned back. I smacked the back of her neck with the hilt of my sword and knocked her out.

I grabbed her and carried her out.

This is for the best. Throw the ones I can’t use away, and keep the ones I can use alive.

“Hurry up! They’re catching up on us!”

The blinding light started to dissipate, and the group of monsters started chasing out tails.

Crap, crap, crap, crap!

The fight till now drained most of my Magic.

Magic is our soul. The lesser it is, the harder it is to think straight. That’s the only thing I want to avoid.

“Am I… Going to die…?”

“No! I don’t want to die!”

From here and there I can hear sounds of despair and fear of death.

They probably used too much magic and their minds have become weaker.

Looks like we can only use physical attacks for now.

How do I run away from those guys… How?!”

“…Hm? Wah!? What’s with this group!”

A healthy voice reached my ears. One not drowned in despair.

Looking up, I saw Katsuragi.

–I got a good idea. How to break through this situation.

“Oi! Katsuragi! Run to the staircase! At full speed! A group of monsters are chasing us!”

I ordered Katsuragi. With his personality he wouldn’t refuse.

“Wha- You lie, dammit!”

As I thought he ran towards the staircase. He probably was left behind trying to escape.

Crap ran towards the stairs in the shortest route. We quickly reached the staircase.

He tried to get up.

And this is the perfect timing.

“Thanks, Katsuragi!”

“Eh?”

He turned his face over in disbelief of my words of gratitude.

He stopped moving for a moment.

He was there standing still.

“Spirits of the flame! Burn everything! Fireball!”

I fired a fireball at him.

“Wha- Whoaaaa!”

Burning his clothes, he got surrounded in flames.

At this moment, he shouted in pain and agony.

“Everyone! Use this chance to get up!”

On my word the classmates climbed up after me.

As my spirit was weaker, I couldn’t think of anything but escape.

The soldiers didn’t complain of my errors. Only Phage looked towards me, staring silently.

“Is everyone here!?”

“Wait! I’m still here!”

The hoarse voice belonged to Katsuragi. Parts of his clothes were burned off.
Those parts had darkened skin underneath. Probably burned.

He tried to climb up the stairs on all fours. The monsters were chasing behind.

“Shut up. You got an important role. Everyone! Help me push this guy down! That way the monsters won’t come up!

“Wha-”

“Really!? Really!?”

“We’ll live…?”

“We have to… Or we’ll get killed!”

It was humorous after that.

One of them stopped Katsuragi’s feet with Earth magic, and the guys pushed him down.

And then, without hesitation, they threw him into the monsters.

“Ah”

A stupid voice; a stupid face.

Katsuragi readily fell into the monsters, buried beneath. No sign of him was left in sight.

He would be eaten by the monsters to the bone marrow.

This was the best method I thought of.

To stop the demons, a bair was needed. However, us heroes can’t be bait.

However, there’s one. Our useless classmate, Katsuragi.

If it were the “Talentless Hero”, the country wouldn’t mind.

He has fulfilled an honorable role. The monsters are focused on eating him.

“See ya, Katsuragi. It’s great isn’t it; in the end you finally became useful.”

I sealed the staircase with magic so that nothing could come back out.

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…Ugh… Where am I…?

I can’t move my body. The memories are flowing in my head.

I was tricked by Samejima, became bait, and was killed by the monsters.

What a terrible life…

But, I guess it’s fine. I was able to escape from those guys.

If I meet them again, no matter what happens I wouldn’t just kill them.

Kill them just once. No, I’ll torture them to death. Bring them pain until they die.
I’ll crush their fingers, rip off the flesh of their feet and break their heads just as they did to me.

And then, I’ll finally feel refreshed. I don’t care what happens to me afterwards.

……. Hold on…

Right now, I’m conscious… Does this mean, I’m reincarnating to my next life!?

That’s the only explanation!

This time I'll get cheat powers, and create a harem!

Even without that, at least let me marry and have an enjoyable life!

All right! Let's go.

Lets reincarnate in this other world.

I opened my eyes with that in mind.

I'm shocked. I thought they wouldn't open. However, that isn't the reason.

For some reason, what came into my eyes was-

"–Huh?"

The dungeon where I died, "Rigal's Den".

Chapter 5 - “Revenge of the Resented”

Katsuragi Daichi, 16 years old.

Who thought he was dead, was living.

No no no!

“…What’s the meaning of this?”

I’m confused. I woke up in such a mess, that the information got jumbled up.

Let’s fix that. Calm down. It’s times like this where a deep breath helps.

Hnggg- No wait, I’m not pregnant!

Breathe in… Breathe out.

…Alright, let’s get this straight.

Whether this is Rostalgia, or another world similar to it.

Good thing there’s a really simple way for me to quickly check.

To speak those words.

“Open.”

And it appeared silently in front of my eyes.

==========
Katsuragi Daichi Class: Hero Level 2

Stamina: 1300

Magic: 2520

Physical: 3400

Endurance: 2600

Agility: 1400

Special Abilities: “Steel Heart” During battle, Endurance increases. Poison, Paralysis, Sleep, Berserk has a 1/3 chance of not working.
“Persistent Soul” Magic cannot be less than 100.

“Wight King”: Able to make contracts with living beings near death, to revive them and make them obey to your will. Every time the user dies twice, increases the limit to the number of contracts. Currently two contracts are available.

Unique Ability: “Revenge of the Resented” No matter how many times you die, power stored in the abyss of death is taken for revival.

Currently, number of deaths: 5 times
==========

“…What!?”

I rubbed my eyes. It’s a lie. No way.

Once more, I closed my Status and opened it again.

The floating numbers shown didn’t change.

“What with these crazy numbers!?”

Four digits. Every single status.

Even higher than Samejima’s 500, my statuses are above 1000.

It’s a number of times over his!

No, it’s not the right time to say that.

“What’s this, a unique ability?

If I swallowed the explanation, I can’t die. The part “power stored…is taken” would explain the ridiculous numbers. Looks like it’s different from a Special Ability.

Putting that aside, I already died five times…

W-Well, I’m fine now. I can’t change the past. I’m alive. OK.

Putting that aside, I gained some Special Abilities. They’re all pretty powerful.

Especially “Persistent Soul” and “Wight King”.

My Magic can’t drop below 100. I can use all the magic I want.

I wonder if I can control any monster.

The details aren’t well written, but I’ll figure it out through use.

“Well, these Statuses mean that I’m in Rostalgia…”

I died and revived five times. Probably, I was revived and eaten, revived and eaten…

Probably through that loop of events.

As long as I have this “Revenge of the Resented”, I can’t die.

This is the only thing I’m certain of; I trust in my Unique Ability.

Hm? If that’s the case my Statuses are the real thing.

I’ll need to put this into practice. I know that experience is valuable.

I might not need it, but just in case. This isn’t the world I once knew. This is Rostalgia.

“Next up is actually testing it out.”

I looked around.

The floor wasn’t brown but it was splattered in red. It’s organic material.

As I touched it, a splatter was heard.

I would’ve preferred if it was water, but it was blood.

“…This is my blood… Isn’t it…”

There’s quite a lot. I died five times, so it can’t be helped.

…Am I… really alive?

I patted myself down, all bloodied. I rolled up my shirt to check for scars. Not a single scratch could be found.

My clothes got soaked in blood and turned red… It’s a weird feeling.

“…Now then,”

I got up and stretched a bit.

“What should I do next?”

The first objective should be to get out of this dungeon.

To get up I’ll have to use the staircase, but that’s been blocked by Earth-attribute magic.

I only have a copper sword with me. Moreover, it was cracked in half. Probably done by the monsters.

My stuff turning back to the state before I died was one of the unlucky things in the pile of blessings.

“-Which means I’ll be going unarmed, huh.”

It’s unsafe. However, It’s the same if I don’t move. I don’t have food so I’d die of starvation, probably.

I don’t want that. I don’t want to stay here.

I have to use these lives to the fullest.

This time I’ll fight back. I’ll do what I think is right.

That’s why; I’ll have my revenge on those guys. I’ll kill them all. I’ll hit them with all the resentment I’ve piled up till now.

That’s what I resolved myself into.

If that’s what I decided, I’ll do it.

“For now, I should increase my Level and Statuses…”

No matter how high my Statuses are I'm still against 29 heroes.

I don't know how to fight against many targets, and I don't even know magic.

If that's the case becoming stronger isn't a bad idea.

If I beat the final boss in this dungeon, I might be able to get out. This was just like a dungeon crawler, and in those games, if you beat the boss you'll get transported out.

Trying it out wouldn't be a bad start.

"Alright, let's find the staircase."

I grabbed my bag on the floor, and started walking.

After a while, I reached a big room with a large open door.

"This is…"

The doors wouldn't close.

The room was drenched in red and green blood. The green were the monsters', and the red were Samejima's and the others', huh.

"Looks like there's nothing else… Hm?"

I looked from the left corner to the right corner of the room, and I found a corpse.

And also, the silver wolf eating the meat off of it.

"Gah-"

The grotesque scene unconsciously made me blurt out a sound.

It was enough to attract its attention.

“Grrrrr!!”

The wolf came towards me. With unrivaled speed, it came close to me- and leapt.

“Whoa!?”

The wolf jumped in a straight line, like a bullet. I tossed out a punch in reflex.

At that instant, the sound of my fist made a rugged sound on the bones, and the wolf’s head burst.

“Eh, did… I kill it?”

My arm pierced through between its head and neck. I could see my fist on the other side.

The wolf convulsed, and its limbs drooped down in an instant.

It died. With one punch of mine.

“…Haha… Hahaha! Amazing! Awesome!”

I realized the greatness of my feats, and laughed uncontrollably.

I killed the monster Samejima and the others were afraid of. Just by myself, in one punch.

It couldn’t be helped that I was ecstatic.

It was the first time I felt this way.

“Hmph!”

I pulled out my left hand from the corpse and tossed it backwards. At that time I crept closer to the corpse I was so indulged in.

“This is…”

Black hair dropping down to the waist. A large chest that didn’t fit the half-eaten body, and most importantly, a small figure.

There’s no mistaking it. Only one person I know has this feature.

The person dead in front of me was Hamakaze Shuri. A kind of mascot in our class.

“…Isn’t this fine?”

I don’t mean this situation. I’m not that perverted.”

She was the most suitable to test out my Special Ability.

“According to the explanation, I can use it on dead beings, right…?”

I tried to remember the explanation I saw. If my memory serves me right, it was so.

“Then, let’s test it out. Let’s try to get the hang of this.”

I activated my Special Ability “Wight King” on Hamakaze. And then, the method on how to use it flowed into my head.

“You. Now, I shall give you new life. I shall give you a second life. Here, sign a contract with me, and fulfill your duty as my servant. “Wight Back!”

Blue sparkles dropped from my hands to Hamakaze. Under her, a magic circle in the form of the Star of David flared up.

“The wounds heal too, huh!”

It became sort of interesting.

Her injuries quickly healed.

I would definitely prefer if her innards weren’t minced meat.

The light grasped onto her for about ten minutes.

Finally it disappeared.

Probably, it was a signal for her revival.

“Oi, Ooooi, Hamakaze. Wake up.”

Timidly, I poked her soft cheeks to check if she turned back to life.

And then, her closed black eyes opened.

It’s not cloudy. They’re eyes with a soul.

She’s even breathing. Her chests, exposed to the limits, were faintly moving up and down.

“Experiment… Success!”

Today, I received a power that ignored the laws of the world.

Chapter 6 - “Slaves and Magic and True Skill”

“H-Huh? I’m… alive? Didn’t I die?”

Her words were trembling. Without batting an eye to me directly in front, she checked her own body.

…Deja vu.

“Oi, are you alright?”

I can’t just stand here with her.

If more monsters come it would be a pain. I don’t have time to waste.

And so, I called out to her and stretched out my hand.

In any case, she probably would just insult me.

And then I would punish her,

… Or so I thought.

“Ah… Y-yes…”

Hamakaze replied, with her cheeks turning red. As she stood up, grasping my hand, she blankly stared at me.

Just like a maiden in love.

…No no no, I can’t be saying that.

“U-Um!”

“Yes?”

“I-I’m Hamakaze Shuri. Um… May I know your name?”

“…Huh?”

What is she asking? Doesn’t she know I’m Katsuragi Daichi?

“U-umm, do you not want to? I’m s-sorry.”

Hamakaze, humbly averting her eyes.

H-Huh? What happened?

I need to confurm the situation.

“Oi, Hamakaze.”

“Shu-Shuri is fine.”

“Sorry, but I’m not one you would like to be called that. I’m Katsuragi Daichi.”

“…Eh? Katsuagi Dai… Eh?”

Hamakaze, mumbling and pointing at me. It’s hilarious.

“Yup. The one who was summoned with you.”

“No-No way…!”

Hamakaze, sitting down.

Looks like the fleeting hope I had broke down.

It felt a bit refreshing.

“Hey, Hamakaze. There’s something I want to ask of you.”

“…”

“Oi, Hamakaze.”

“…Don’t talk to me, Katsuragi.”

“…Hm.”

When she knew who I was, I get replied with the back of her hand. Looks like things never change.

But, our positions are different than before.

I’m the strong one, and you are the weakling.

“Hamakaze. This isn’t a request. It’s an order. Answer the question I’m about to give.”

“What are you saying? Don’t you know your place?”

And then she casted a spell.

“Spirits of the Flame, burn everything to ashes! Fireball!”

The floating orb of flame didn’t come out. Hamakaze blinked.

“Wha-Why!? I should have a lot of Magic left!”

“Won’t you know through your Status?”

I made a grin that a villain would make.

I think I know why she can’t use her magic.

“O-open!”

==========
Hamakaze Shuri Class: Higher Slave Level 12

Stamina: 620

Magic: 520

Physical: 190

Endurance: 200

Agility: 320

Special Ability: “Auto-heal” Heals 5 Stamina every 10 minutes.

Special Status: “Higher Slave” Owner: Katsuragi Daichi

Seals all abilities against him until release.
==========

“Wha-What is this…”

She was dumbfounded.

By the way, I can see the Statuses of my slaves.

Hamakaze is seeing the same Status as I am.

“Do you understand, Hamakaze? I’m the master, you’re the servant. You can’t defy me.”

“I-I can’t accept that!”

“It’s the truth. After all that, isn’t this punishment from the heavens for all that you did to me?”

“I-I didn’t do anything!”

“Mhm. You didn’t really bully me, but you didn’t try to help. It’s the same.”

“No way…”

“Do you understand how I felt? Probably not. Every day that comes, I get hit, insulted; you wouldn’t understand my feelings.”

“…”

Hamakaze was unable to reply. Obviously. She can’t really understand.

She only knew that I was mad.

“…Tch, just answer my question… Oh, here.”

I passed my robe to her.

“W-What?”

“It’s a robe. You can cover yourself, right? Are you trying to tempt me?

“Hide…? Ah- kya!!”

Looks like she finally realized. She grabbed the robe from my hands and covered her chest, hugging it.

She glared at me with a sharp gaze, and murmured something softly.

“Huh? Did you say something?”

“It’s nothing! Don’t look here!”

“…Well, fine by me.”

I left the room, and Hamakaze followed behind.

“…Thank you.”

Let’s keep it a secret that those words I haven’t heard in a while reached my ears.

… Sometimes, it’s not bad.

◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆

After that, while looking around the floor for the staircase, we talked back and forth.

“Eh… Then, we have to fight those guys?

“I guess.”

“No way… It’s impossible…”

“Why do you think that?”

“I mean, Samejima even faltered! How can we even beat him?”

Before, I showed her my specs, which were way higher than Samejima’s, but…

She doesn’t seem to believe in it.

I probably don’t need to correct that now.

“Don’t worry, Hamakaze. I’ll protect you.”

“Wha-! I-Idiot! Even though you’re Katsuragi, the weakling!”

Hamakaze suddenly turned red and started fiddling her fingers.

What is this, is she this easy?

Or maybe it's that I'm not my usual self.

She's misunderstanding it. The ones protecting you will be subordinates, and the more, the better. I already died five times.

And so, when your consciousness gets back to your body there seems to be some sort of lag. In this moment I want them to protect me to the death.

When I die, I bring them with me.

It's not something out of kindness.

And then I settled the question.

What I knew.

First of all, my appearance changed.

My face became better, but my stature didn't change. I didn't get fatter. My figure became better. Was my fat that delicious?

I don't think I'm far off, but this is probably the effect of "Revenge of the Resented".

"When I first saw you I my heart was racing, but inside it's Katsuragi…"

"Be quiet. This personality was because of you guys."

"Uuu…"

Hamakaze became quiet.

Speaking of which, I wonder how she feels getting thrown away by her classmates.

Betrayed; Cast away; Hamakaze came to this side.

If she resents Samejima as well then she would be willing to perform vengeance together.

Since I'm so much more familiar with such pain and suffering.

Next I learned the magic Hamakaze herself can't use. Thanks to that I got more variations in my attacks.

Two hours passed having such conversation.

We went back to the large room we started at.

However, this time the door was closed.

"Hm? Why is it closed?"

"I wonder… Ah!"

Looks like she remembered after shaking her head.

Seems to be an unpleasant memory.

Her face looks horrible.

Speaking of which, she died in this room. It's trauma, I guess.

"Hamakaze… Tell me what happened here. If you don't, I won't be able to deal with it."

Hamakaze weakly straightened herself.

“After opening this door, suddenly monsters attacked in waves. Maybe this time it will happen again…”

“What types?”

“Rigals, Ariants and a High Wolf.”

Weren’t those the ones that ate me? I got to settle things.

Time for a revenge match.

“I see. Thanks.”

“I think we should back off and check things out further…”

“Alright, let’s go in.”

“You already decided!?”

Fighting waves of monsters was favorable. It would be easy to see my actual strength.

There are things numbers won’t be able to show.

The worst outcome is that I would die and revive, and I probably can revive Hamakaze as well. Even though I don’t like pain.

I pushed opened the gates.

Empty space. I walked to the center together with Hamakaze.

Suddenly, a light shone from above. “Eeek!” Hamakaze was about to cry, but I can’t be worrying about that.

“Hamakaze, stand by. If monsters come to you be prepared.”

“What about you!?”

“I’ll beat all that come out.”

“Huh!?”

“They’re coming! Smash them with magic! Grab onto me!”

“Eh- Wait! Ah…”

I embraced Hamakaze, who was dawdling about.

To be truthful, I wanted to test out how far I could grope her.

“First, I’ll go with full force!”

My Magic focused in my right hand, as if it was compressing.

“Wha-what is this!?”

Winds whirled around me. To not be blasted by the wind, I bent down, lowering my center of gravity. The winds that gathered became a sphere floating upon my palm.

“Growl!!”

“Kisha!!”

“Jaaaa!!”

The waves of three monsters appeared. From everywhere, they attacked.

At the same time, I was ready.

“Emperor of the Wind! Cut through those who oppose my rule of right! The rule of the royalty that spew forth storms! Form upon! Turn everything to dust, and return them to the earth!

Berserk Tempest!!”

As my incantation finished, the ball of wind shot forth.

A high-pitched metal like sound resonated.

It was so loud the monsters’ howls disappeared.

In an instant the space turned silent.

The silence was broken with sounds of entrails spewing forth.

“…Eh, no way…?”

Hamakaze, who was closing her eyes, lost her words upon the shock of such view.

The person who used it, myself, had the same thought as Hamakaze.

The room was painted in green, filled with grains of light.

I was able to kill all those monsters with one strike.

With such over-the-top power, we were unable to move.

Chapter 7 - “The Real Thing”

Dumbfounded to what just happened, we snapped back to reality as we heard a crumbling sound.

Looking over, a part of the wall broke down, revealing the staircase towards below.

I see. So this was where the path to the 52nd floor was hidden.

It’ll be like this again, probably.

Up to the 50th floor the staircases were already found, so onwards the conditions to progressing might be different.

If that’s so… That’s pretty depressing…

“Wha-Wha-Wha…!”

As I glanced at the classmate clutching on to me, her expression was something I couldn’t really express.

“…What is it?”

“What is it?! It’s this power! Are you a monster?!”

The magic I used, “Berserk Tempest”, was an Imperial-rank magic.

Magic has different ranks; from the strongest they are God-rank, Imperial-rank, Ancient-rank, Royal-rank, Soul-rank and Spirit-rank.

From Imperial-rank, they require a lot of Magic, so they're not something so easily used.

Just now, I experienced such wonder. If anyone could spit out such magic it would be a problem.

Usually people start learning from the basic Spirit-rank spells. Even Samejima can still only use Spirit-rank spells. Putting that aside, Hamakaze's saying something.

She's talking to me on and on very quickly.

"How did you get that strong, Katsuragi?"

"It's none of your business."

"Tell me~, teach me too!"

"Then, go die five times."

"That's mean!"

It's not. I told you the truth. It's just you haven't realized it.

Even if you die, it's not guaranteed you'll be brought back.

Hamakaze, not making any progress reluctantly pulled back unsatisfied.

"Anyway, check your Status. It's important your body is in proper shape."

"What will you do then?"

"Just do it."

"…Alright. Open."

“Open.”

Our Statuses popped at the same time.

==========
Katsuragi Daichi Class: Hero Level 28

Stamina: 1340

Magic: 2600

Physical: 3500

Endurance: 2680

Agility: 1500

Special Abilities: “Steel Heart” During battle, Endurance increases. Poison, Paralysis, Sleep, Berserk has a 1/3 chance of not working.

“Persistent Soul” Magic cannot be less than 100.

“Wight King”: Able to make contracts with living beings near death, to revive them and make them obey to your will. Every time the user dies twice, increases the limit to the number of contracts. Currently two contracts are available.

“Absolute Order” Appears when those bound by a contract are lower leveled than the Wight King. Any order will be accepted by the slave until it is cancelled.

“Murderous Magician”: Killed targets within a radius of 10m will deal the same damage to all units of the same type.

Unique Ability: “Revenge of the Resented” No matter how many times you die, power stored in the abyss of death is taken for revival.

At the moment, number of deaths: 5 times
==========

==========
Hamakaze Shuri Class: Higher Slave Level 23

Stamina: 1000

Magic: 720

Physical: 680

Endurance: 420

Agility: 400

Special Ability: “Auto-heal” Heals 60 Stamina every 10 minutes.

Special Status: “Higher Slave” Owner: Katsuragi Daichi
Seals all abilities against him until release.
==========

“Huh!? My Status also increased!?”

Hamakaze, engrossed in her Statuses

Looks like her level also increased…

Maybe it’s because she’s a “Slave”. Speaking of which, Hamakaze’s class isn’t “Slave”, it’s “Higher Slave.”

Maybe as a “Higher Slave”, she gains the some of the experience that I get.

In this world the concept of “experience” doesn’t exist. They believe that levels are gained through battles and victories. It’s not listed on the Status, too.

In other words, this “Higher Slave” was a class I made. If not, this would be against common sense.

… Now then, let’s leave this here. It’s not the time to be escaping reality.

Leaving that aside, there’s a more serious problem.

Why is it that my Statuses didn’t go up that much?

Even though I leveled up quite a lot.

Is it because of “Revenge of the Resented”? Or maybe some other reason? I don’t know.

Dammit, I don’t have enough information.

“Katsuragi! Katsuragi! My Statuses increased!”

“Be quiet. It’s not time for that.”

“What’s with that!? Don’t you have anything better to say?”

“Yes, yes… It’s great, isn’t it! It’ll be useful for myself.”

“Who would do t for you!?”

It’s not fair.

She’s saying it again, this amateur. Looks like there’s still a need for showing her place.

"… Hey, Hamakaze. I actually want to test out something."

My Statuses haven't changed much, but in place I got a new ability.

It's "Absolute Order." According to the explanation I need to be a higher level.

So, before it wasn't there. It was thanks to those monsters that I suddenly leveled up (I think).

Even so, the condition that I need to be a higher level… It's just like how a king needs to be stronger than his subordinates.

Let's leave that for now.

The part that I'm very interested in.

Being able to give any order.

I bet every male high schooler would be jealous of my power.

In my line of sight was Hamakaze.

"Wha…"

Hamakaze turned around, hiding the two plump hills to where I can't see.

"Pervert! Molester!"

"Aren't you noisy… Would I do it here? I'll only lay a hand on you once we get out of this dungeon. For now, be assured."

"How can I feel assured!? What about my right to refuse!?"

"Nope."

I clearly blurted out.

“Brute! You should just die!”

“Even though I’ll revive and power up…”

“I don’t get it!”

She hit my chest. I was thinking that next time I’ll grope her back, but the next thing she said stopped me.

“You… And I… Everything, I don’t get it. Killing those things… Becoming a hero…”

Her shaking fists became slowly weaker.

“… I… Don’t understand!”

The usually naive girl’s voice lost it’s face, and became weakly.

“I don’t want it… What is this place… Why did this happen!?”

Hamakaze crouched down and started crying.

Looks like her heart couldn’t keep it up after coming this far…

The breakwaters that protected us from reality broke down.

It’s not like I don’t understand her feelings. I bet I would be in the same place as Hamakaze, with mucus dripping from my nose crying.

I can understand her state of mind to an extent.

–That’s why, this would be a chance to make Hamakaze “mine”.

I’m such a bad person. Thinking only about this…

“… Oi, Hamakaze.”

“… What?”

“Why do you think we got into this mess?”

“… What good would it be asking that…”

“Just answer me. Why do you think so?”

Hamakaze went back her memories to figure out the reason.

“… Is it because we were summoned by the goddess?”

“Not exactly.”

“Eh…? Then, what is it?”

“It’s Samejima.”

In no time, I quickly stated the target of vengeance.

“Wh-why? I mean, that person requested us, right?”

“Ah, exactly.”

“Th-then-”

“But, we had the right to refuse. Who took that away?”

“Th-That’s…”

Hamakaze was hesitant. She realized who the real criminal was.

“It’s him. He accepted as he pleased, and we all went along with it…”

I whispered into Hamakaze's ear.

"He tossed you aside, and betrayed you."

"—!!"

She grounded her teeth involuntarily.

Looks like she finally opened her eyes to the truth, as well as to the whirling anger and hatred inside.

Even so she endured it. I don't know why, but I don't need to know.

She only needs to drown in her emotion.

"…Why… was I… thrown away…?"

Her crying voice faintly leaked out. Just like a baby who would cling onto a parent, Hamakaze grabbed my sleeve.

"It's because you were weak"

I shook my arm, and she let go.

"I… liked… Samejima… I tried, you know? Even though I was scared, I tried to get stronger…"

"There are many who like him. It wouldn't be problem if you were gone."

I let out a cold tone.

"…I guess."

"Yeah."

I didn't sympathize with her.

“U… Uuu….!”

–But, that wouldn’t be enough. Here, I’ll make her my ally.

“Hamakaze.”

“…Eh?”

I put my arms around the crying Hamakaze’s hips, and embraced her.

“Ka, Katsuragi? Wha- What are you-”

“I won’t throw you away.”

Her fragile heart overreacted.

“Won’t… throw me away…?”

“I’m different than him. I want you. I want you to be by my side.”

“No way… Even without me, Katsuragi…”

“Hamakaze!”

I strengthened my embrace. I wanted to convey my feelings.

“Follow me. I won’t throw you away. I’ll say it many times. I want you.”

“Katsu… ragi…”

The teary eyes that looked at me were left with a small glimpse of light. If she were left alone, she would die.

Just like me in the past.

“Would you… accept me?”

She closed her eyes, and the face soaked with tears came closer.

Lips bloodied from biting came into my eyes.

I'm not sympathizing with her.

I'm not comforting her.

This is fine. Just making her my ally.

Don't think about it anymore.

I got a wonderful subordinate.

That's it.

"Hamakaze…"

"Mhm…"

My first kiss tasted like blood.

On that day, I got a real slave.

Chapter 8 - “The Sixth Time”

Hamakaze and I reached the 60th floor. I think four days have passed, although my senses are a bit fuzzy.

To put it simply, floors 52 to 59 were a pain. One part was the dungeon; the other Hamakaze Shuri.

After that, I had to increase Hamakaze’s Statuses. First I had her kill monsters which I almost killed, and through that she increased her level.

In the middle Hamakaze became impatient, and desired to fight.

She thinks that if she were was not useful she would be thrown away. A good trait for a slave stuck on her.

In the end, it was astounding. Even without me laying a finger, Hamakaze would strike upon encounter. In the next moment they would be turned into dust, and it happened over and over.

Hamakaze out leveled me, but if she would have an attitude or rebelled I could just release her from the contract.

I figured out something new from my Special Ability.

If I released the magic from “Wight King”, the revived creature would go back to being dead. I tried this before with a monster before it disappeared.

First of all, if the monster doesn’t receive a fatal wound and it won’t turn to dust. For instance, in a High Wolf’s case cutting a leg off won’t make it disappear. The cut off leg behaved the same way.

This was really helpful.

Hamakaze and I were unable to eat a lot, and were on empty bellies. We were able to eat meat, so that crisis was averted.

It's a shame that the monsters' meat isn't that tasty.

By the way, this were my thoughts on our progress.

"Daichi. Please open your mouth."

"Mhm."

Hamakaze brought up the wolf meat cooked with Fire magic and brought it to my mouth.

After that day, Hamakaze changed drastically, from the way she speaks to what she does.

She's a really obedient and honest girl. Sometimes her annoying over dependence shows up, but as that's how I trained her it's fine if it's just a bit.

However, I would like it if she'd stop hugging me every time we go to sleep.

It would be a problem if my desires would be released. I'm a guy, too.

Those were Hamakaze's annoying points.

…But,

It's helpful if she's taking care of me. I didn't make a mistake that time.

Yeah, I didn't.

"Daichi"

“Nn, Thanks.”

“Thank you very much.”

My Stamina’s recovered from the food. Hamakaze’s also eating.

For drinks if we can use weak Water magic it wouldn’t be a problem.

“…Um…Daichi,”

“What?”

“U-Um… Can I get you to feed me?”

Hamakaze, timidly asking. Her cheeks had a rush of blood.

“Eat by yourself. Why is it that I have to do so?”

“Y-Yes… I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it… After we get out of here I’ll think about it.”

“Y-Yes!”

Hamakaze delightfully bit down on her High Wolf meat.

Just like a carrot and stick.

After finally eating a meal in days, we sat cross-legged on the cold floor.

“What do we do after this? Am I fighting again?”

“Ah, that was the plan. But, we don’t know where the staircase is.”

“The enemy’s Statuses don’t really matter, do they?”

“Ah, speaking of which I haven’t checked yet.”

I backed off a bit and met eyes with the dead High Wolf.

This guy was also a slave, wasn’t he? I was planning on using him as food, but I forgot.

“Open.”

==========
Katsuragi Daichi Class: Hero Level 46

Stamina: 1430

Magic: 2690

Physical: 3630

Endurance: 2770

Agility: 1600

Special Abilities: “Steel Heart” During battle, Endurance increases. Poison, Paralysis, Sleep, Berserk has a 1/3 chance of not working.

“Persistent Soul” Magic cannot be less than 100.

“Wight King”: Able to make contracts with living beings near death, to revive them and make them obey to your will. Every time the user dies twice, increases the limit to the number of contracts. Currently zero contracts are available.

“Absolute Order” Appears when those bound by a contract are lower leveled than the Wight King. Any order will be accepted by the slave until cancelled.

“Murderous Magician”: Killed targets within a radius of 10m will deal the same damage to all units of the same type.

Unique Ability: “Revenge of the Resented” No matter how many times you die, power stored in the abyss of death is taken for revival.

At the moment, number of deaths: 5 times

==========

==========
Hamakaze Shuri Class: Higher Slave Level 57

Stamina: 2000

Magic: 1750

Physical: 1900

Endurance: 1000

Agility: 980

Special Ability: “Auto-heal” Heals 300 Stamina every 10 minutes.

“Loyal Heart”: When the master’s life is at danger, all Statuses increase by 1.5x.

Special Status: “Higher Slave” Owner: Katsuragi Daichi
Seals all abilities against him until release.

==========

==========
High Wolf Class: Higher Slave Level 30

Stamina: 950

Magic: 350

Physical: 1200

Endurance: 600

Agility: 1300

Special Abilities: None

Special Status: “Higher Slave” Owner: Katsuragi Daichi
Seals all abilities against him until release.

==========

“It’s higher than I thought.”

“Yup. Even better than the crappy hero.”

“…You…”

Some sort of defect? Hamakaze, shaking her head ,smiled.

I didn’t think it was too conspicuous… To me it’s a good sign.

It’s best if her desire for revenge becomes stronger.

“…No, it’s nothing. Let’s prepare for the 60th floor.”

“Let’s.”

“Let’s what?” I didn’t confirm.

“Alright. Let’s kill some monsters.”

“Then, how about we start from this dog?”

“Ah, that’s fine by me. Don’t think it’ll be useful as a shield anymore.”

“I understand. Spirits of the Wind, Cut through the sky. Wind Slice!”

By the blade of the invisible wind, the legless High Wolf had its neck sliced.

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As we were looking for a place with a lot of monsters, we reached a suspicious spot.

A chain in the shape of a cross was hung on a door.

Sinister smoke came seeping out the door.

…Is this… Magic?

“Daichi”

Looks like Hamakaze didn’t sense anything. She glared at the rigid closed door.

…Is this going to work?

Past this point there’s definitely a monster that’s incomparable to the others we faced so far.

And, if we beat the thing inside, the road to the next floor would open up.

This was how it was before. In the floors before there were strong monsters. Maybe it could be a Monster House trap.

“…If we don’t… We won’t be able to take revenge…”

The hatred growing in her heart covered over her fear.

"…Let's go."

I made a fist.

"Yes, Daichi."

"Hamakaze. Let's do it how we did it before."

"I understand."

Hamakaze straightened herself.

First I readied "Berserk Tempest".

Hamakaze became my specialized dagger.

"Spirits of the Wind, cut through the sky! Wind Slice!"

The chains sharply cut. The sealed door opened by itself.

I can't see very well through the mist. Then…

"Blow away the mist!"

I ran into the room first, as the door opened up to fit one person through.

The early bird gets the worm. I'll shoot out Berserk Tempest upin entry.

I had the magic onto my hand, about to shoot.

"Turn everything to dust, and return them to the earth! Berserk Tem-"

But, I didn't complete the magic.

My arm flew midair.

…Eh? My arm? Why?

Huh? Eh? Huh?

I couldn't think. The pain seeped through my entire body.

"Arrrrrrgh!?"

The blood continued gushing.

The unbearable pain attacked me.

It hurts, it's painful, it feels bad.

It hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts!

"Ugh..!"

I felt like I wanted to vomit, and as that happened the inside of my stomach burst out of my abdomen.

"Ha… Ha! Uaahhh…"

My vision became hazy.

Is it because I lost too much blood? No, first of all I need to get out of here.

Let's do that. I don't like pain. If I get out, Hamakaze should be ready with healing magic outside…

As I stood back up, the hand I put on the ground was cut by the wind.

Cut… by the wind?

“Ah?”

I lost both arms. Without any support, I fell flat onto the ground.

The upper half of my body dropped into the inside of the room.

Ah, this is bad…”

“Guuoooooo!!”

Some sort of large roar reached my ears.

As I looked up-

My vision became covered in darkness.

Feeling the sharp pain of my neck being cut off, I lost consciousness.

Chapter 9 - ”Dying”

Darkness. Pitch black. It’s dark.

It’s the only way I can describe this place. There’s no ground. I’m floating. If I try to put in any strength, some sort of force is putting me down.

“Welcome, hero.”

As I point my body towards the voice, I see a girl.

Her long black hair hid her face. She’s in the middle of the darkness and yet you can see the jet-black dress she’s wearing.

She reached out her hand, and walked towards me.

In that moment, something happened.

Murderous intent without regret flowed out. The girl broadly smirked.

“Welcome back. And, good day.”

The cold sweat couldn’t stop dripping down. My head is telling me to run, over and over.

But, I can’t move. My body feels as if rocks bind it.

“Who-Who are you!?”

I managed to raise a question.

However, she didn’t answer.

She was only smiling. It was nothing short of a lunatic laugh from a devil.

Each step she takes closed the distance between us.

“Die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, die, DIE!”

“N-No!!”

My body instantly reacted to the word “die”.

Why do I have to taste that pain!?

Why is it that only I have to feel such pain!?

I can’t move. I can’t resist.

Move! Move!! MOVE!!

“Die.”

In that instant, the white, slim fingers from her hands reached out to my neck–

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“Stooooooop!!”

“Kya!”

“-!!”

I jumped towards the girl’s voice. I grabbed her hips with both arms.

If I don't kill her I'll get killed!

I'll use all my Magic!

"Spirits of the Wind, cut through the sky!"

"Daichi!!"

"–Ah?"

As I was about to finish the incantation, my name was called out, and I stopped the magic.

As I pulled my hand out, I saw a face I knew well.

"…Hamakaze?"

It's her, my slave Hamakaze Shuri.

"Yes… it's Hamakaze Shuri…"

"You're lying! You're a fake. I mean, you were about to kill me just now."

It was the vivid in my memory.

Yeah, some unknown girl grabbed my neck.

But, the scenery is totally different. This is inside a dungeon. I remember the old monochrome colors.

What just happened!?

Somebody was… trying to kill me…

"Please calm down, Daichi."

Hamakaze's voice stopped the thoughts fallen in confusion.

"I don't know what just happened to you, but I can help."

Hamakaze grabbed my lost hands to her chest.

"Nn…" I sighed.

"I won't mind anything you would do to me. If it'll bring you back, I'll do anything. So please, calm down for now."

The sweet voice infused my mind, removing the confused thoughts, and untangled the cluttered strings of my emotion.

As my mind became more clear, I was able to put things in order a little.

My jumbled up breathing returned to a smooth rhythm.

"…Daichi… Are you alright?"

"Um, Yeah…"

"I see. That's great…"

Hamakaze let out a sigh of relief. It was a sign that I was acting very off up to before.

Dammit… I was seized by the fear of death.

"Um… Daichi,"

"What?"

"Um… If you so desire, we can keep going…"

"Ah"

I was on top of Hamakaze. Even more, my hands were on her plump breasts…

I figured out what she was trying to say.

“N-No, I didn’t mean to. I’ll get down. Just, wait a bit.”

Taking heed of my recovered brain, I wanted to verify something.

The possibility of her being a fake.

“Open”

==========
Katsuragi Daichi Class: Hero Level 46

Stamina: 3100

Magic: 3240

Physical: 4080

Endurance: 3400

Agility: 2130

Special Abilities: “Steel Heart” During battle, Endurance increases. Poison, Paralysis, Sleep, Berserk has a 1/3 chance of not working.

“Persistent Soul” Magic cannot be less than 100.

“Wight King”: Able to make contracts with living beings near death, to revive them and make them obey to your will. Every time the user dies twice, increases the limit to the number of contracts. Currently two contracts are available.

“Absolute Order” Appears when those bound by a contract are lower leveled than the Wight King. Any order will be accepted by the slave until cancelled.

“Murderous Magician”: Killed targets within a radius of 10m will deal the same damage to all units of the same type.

Unique Ability: “Revenge of the Resented” No matter how many times you die, power stored in the abyss of death is taken for revival.

At the moment, number of deaths: 6 times

==========

==========
Hamakaze Shuri Class: Higher Slave Level 57

Stamina: 2000

Magic: 1750

Physical: 1900

Endurance: 1000

Agility: 980

Special Ability: “Auto-heal” Heals 300 Stamina every 10 minutes.

“Loyal Heart”: When the master’s life is at danger, all Statuses increase by 1.5x.

Special Status: “Higher Slave” Owner: Katsuragi Daichi
Seals all abilities against him until release.

==========

The figures were unmistakably Hamakaze Shuri's.

My Statuses also increased.

The contract limit for "Wight King" increased to 3.

Moreover, my death counter became 6.

Which means, this wasn't just some sort of daydream; that world that I saw between that door.

It was all real…

"…Sigh…"

I loosened up, and dropped flat on the spot.

A feeling of relief passed, and my nervousness was cut.

"What happened!?"

Hamakaze asked about my well being.

"I'm just tired."

"B-But…"

"Don't worry… I'm just sleepy… I can't… Anymore…"

The feeling of safety was unable to win against my drowsiness, and I closed my eyes.

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"Then, let's start the meeting on how to beat the boss.

I was at the staircase leading to the 59th floor, resting on Hamakaze's soft lap.

Hamakaze looked to the opposite. Being near the stairs, she'll be able to escape if something unexpected happens.

"First, Hamakaze. Tell me what happened after I died."

"Alright."

Hamakaze followed my demands and explained in detail.

"After you were cut up in the gap of the door, I brought your lower half to a safe location. I believed in your ability.

"How long until my body came back?"

"About three to four minutes. Also, the enemy did not give chase. That, and two other odd things."

"Tell me. Right now, any information is priceless.

"I understand. First of all, the enemy stopped attacking."

"Stopped?"

Hamakaze nodded lightly in confirmation.

"After you died, the flurry of attacks stopped. That's why your lower half was safe. The other half was probably being chopped up."

After my death it didn't attack. Hmm, so there are monsters that do that.

I'll need to verify everything.

“The other thing?”

“…Um, the second… um… It might that I was just imagining it, but…”

“It’s fine. Right now our lives are more precious. To beat the boss, I’ll need any details. Tell me.”

“…Please don’t be surprised…”

She reassured it again, but what she said was the same thing I saw.”

“The figure of the thing that killed you wasn’t of a monster; it was something we’ve never seen before. It’s as if–it was a human like us.”

Chapter 10 - “The Fight Begins”

“Like… A human?”

There was a person in. If it were a regular dungeon, it wouldn’t be odd. There’s a class called “Explorer” as well.

However, they wouldn’t be where we are. Especially since we’re in the unknown 60th floor.

If what Hamakaze said a moment ago was true it would be a turn for the better.

Probably, the answer was no.

“Yes. If it is a human then you might be able to talk to them.”

“Yeah, it would be nice if it goes well.”

If they don’t have any hostility they won’t attack. I’m pretty sure if some unknown person came in and started attacking, they would unmistakably try to kill me.

“If it was sealed that tightly there must have been a good reason.”

“That’s… Right.”

“However, we can’t throw away the possibility- even though that’s very slim.”

I took a deep breath.

“Anyhow, the thing that killed me should be the key point here.”

That strength was absurd. It doesn’t compare to any of the monsters we’ve fought. It draws a line.

“What do you mean?”

“If we beat it we I can get a strong servant, and clearing the dungeon would be a breeze.”

It completely ignored my Endurance and sliced me. I can definitely use it.

Also, there’s one more thing. It’s only my hunch, but…

“What if we beat that thing, we clear the dungeon?”

“If that’s so, maybe this was why this place was sealed up?”

Hamakaze didn’t deny my opinion. However, she pointed out the contradiction.

In the end, a third-party really does help, and grasps things that I don’t. I’m not perfect.

It would be stupid to dismiss another person’s opinion. What ever it is, if it’s usable I’ll use it.

Hamakaze smoothly agreed with me and also added some doubts to consider.

“That might be valid. Whatever the reason, in the end there’s only one more route to go.”

Putting it that way makes things simple, but in practice it’s difficult.

However, I can't just stand here, or I can't beat the crap out of Samejima.

"Getting back to topic, Hamakaze. Tell me how I was when I was killed. How and from what did I die? Just tell me what you know."

"… There's a limit to how far I remember, but…"

"First, when you opened the door you were about to use Berserk Tempest. Also, you weren't in the room yet."

I do remember that. I then suddenly realized my arm flew off…
Remembering that sort of brings back the feeling of the pain.

"After that, you suddenly fell flat. After that…"

"I died, right?"

"Yes."

"What happened after that?"

"Your lower half was fine… So I took it and moved away. That's all."

"That's it. I'm sort of hung up there… Why did the enemy let me go? If you were able to retrieve me then you should've been inside its attack range."

"…I, also thought about it. Is there some sort of reason?"

…A reason, huh?

Why didn't it attack… No, it couldn't attack…?

If I were the enemy, I wouldn't let myself escape. I'd take their life.

Hypothetically speaking, maybe there was some sort of condition, and because of that it couldn't attack…?

The chains sealing the room were tightly shut. That means it was set up so that the being inside wouldn't be let out. However, with Hamakaze's magic it was easily cut.

"…Huh?"

I remember an odd feeling.

If the chains were easily broken by Spirit-rank magic, it would easily break out.

But, it didn't.

Which means, it wasn't the chains, but if it's something the enemy itself can't control then–

The doubts were solved, and I figured it out.

"…Hamakaze. When I died, where was my corpse?"

"Your… corpse?"

"Yeah. What if… My lower half was outside the room, and my inner half inside…?

"Y-Yes, it was so…. Do you remember anything after you died?

Hamakaze looked frankly shocked.

"…No, it's just a guess. A guess… but I believe in it."

It didn't come out. It didn't reach out.

In that case, there would be many ways to lay my hands on it

“It killed me once. I’ll need to return the favor… right?”

I dusted off the dirt on my rear. Hamakaze, who was already standing up, came to my side.

“I’ll kill it, the monster sealed within.”

“As you wish.”

We moved out to grab the things I needed in the plan I thought up.

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The doors opened again. The chains were just like the Monster House in the 51st floor.

As I thought, this room has some sort of importance.

The smoke came out from the gap. Only this room rewound time.

The slaves I have are Hamakaze, High Wolf 1 and 2.

“As the door opens, High Wolves 1 and 2, rush in. Hamakaze, protect my life.”

I gave out their “Absolute Order”.

To attack, I’ll need to get rid of that mist. However, we don’t have the time for that.

As Hamakaze said, the enemy didn’t come out for me. I think it “couldn’t come out”, instead of “didn’t come out”.

Moreover, the part that was cut off from me was the part that was inside. The latter didn't get cut. It didn't lay a finger on it.

Which means, it's safer to attack from the outside.

That's what I think.

Of course, while looking for the High Wolves, I explained it to Hamakaze as well. She concurred, and even swore to defend me by my side.

And then, we arrived here.

"…Daichi,"

"This time I'll kill it with Berserk Tempest. You protect me."

"…Alright."

Hamakaze readied her knife, and started casting Wind, while I readied Berserk Tempest.

High Wolf 1 was to bait it so as to attract attention.

"Alright! Hamakaze! Open the door!"

"Roger!"

Hamakaze opened the heavy gates.

It was the signal to fight to the death.

"Number 1! Go!!"

"Groowwlll!!!"

The howling silver wolf jumped into the room of death.

“Guooooo!!”

A ferocious cry erased the High Wolf’s roars. I remember hearing it, but I can’t see it.

The giant shadow it cast was enough.

“Goooaaaaa!”

The wolf was recklessly cut. At this timing, Wolf 2 rushes in.

At the same time I released my magic.

“Berserk Tempest!!”

The gales blew forth. The smoke dissipated, and it went towards us.

“Wind!!”

Hamakaze blew away the smoke that covered out vision.

At this moment I couldn’t move away my eyes.

A metallic sound resonated.

The sliced up High Wolf’s flesh dropped down.

The smoke disappeared, and the room became slightly brighter.

The smoke finally cleared== And the being inside opened its eyes.

The giant shadow was just an illusion.

There was no giant; instead there was a girl adorned in a black robe.

The wind magic blew off her hood, her features became clear.

It wasn't far off from what Hamakaze described.

It wasn't a human, but it was in the shape of a human.

"…Oi, are you kidding me?"

"…It can't be…"

They were told in legends of the previous world.

They're the incarnation of people's fear. The long sword stained in blood. Red skin. Burning scarlet eyes.

Shining horns growing from the head.

Yes, they're…

Oni.

"This is the second time we face, heroes?"

A hostile smile and short teeth.

My senses are telling me danger.

That woman had the same murderous intent.

She was the one that killed me.

Her body above all told me.

It was the figure of one who hunts lives.

In front of her, was us.

"Now then… Shall the killing begin?"

The impending slice finally cut down the curtains of this fight to the death.

Chapter 11 - “Kill”

I closed in after that one strike. I came in past the border where she couldn’t hit me–

“Wha-!?”

Unexpectedly, confusion ran inside. For now, we need to dodge. And yet, Hamakaze didn’t move, just like a statue.

Did she get done in by the Oni’s blood thirst!?

“Jump to the side!!”

I shouted as loud as I can, unable to move my body as well.

Through “Absolute Order”, Hamakaze jumped to the right unconsciously as I did.

The shock wave from the sword hit the walls of the dungeon and burst. The wall remained undamaged, but there was the sound of an explosion.

“Kuh!”

It was a sound so loud it could’ve burst my eardrums, but I took notice of the girl fallen down on my side.

“Get yourself together, Hamakaze!”

“I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry”

Hamakaze couldn't hold her conscience. She's just like a frightened child.

Dammit, she just lost it.

"As expected of a hero. My "Oni Pressure" didn't drive you mad."

From the room, the Oni made a sarcastic compliment.

The Oni looked at us from inside.

"Come on. Leave her and fight me. I'm getting fired up!"

"…You can't get out of there, can you? Then I won't cross over to the dangerous side-"

"You get it, right? This is an important place for you guys."

"…"

…This Oni. She knows our objective? She also called us "Heroes" before.

"Even so, I don't even need to fight alone."

"She can't fight anymore. As long as my "Oni Pressure" still exists, she won't return to her senses until you beat me.

"…Do you think you can trick me?"

"Check it out. Ah- I won't attack while you do."

She's telling me I can attack when I want.

Her coming out from the room would be unexpected…

What should I do?

…Either way, I need to know Hamakaze's status right now…

While being alert of the Oni, I opened up the Status.

"…Open"
==========
Katsuragi Daichi Class: Hero Level 58

Stamina: 3190

Magic: 3310 -> 510

Physical: 4100

Endurance: 3510

Agility: 2200

Special Abilities: "Steel Heart" During battle, Endurance increases. Poison, Paralysis, Sleep, Berserk has a 1/3 chance of not working.

"Persistent Soul" Magic cannot be less than 100.

"Wight King": Able to make contracts with living beings near death, to revive them and make them obey to your will. Every time the user dies twice, increases the limit to the number of contracts. Currently two contracts are available.

"Absolute Order" Appears when those bound by a contract are lower leveled than the Wight King. Any order will be accepted by the slave until cancelled.

"Murderous Magician": Killed targets within a radius of 10m will deal the same damage to all units of the same type.

Unique Ability: “Revenge of the Resented” No matter how many times you die, power stored in the abyss of death is taken for revival.

At the moment, number of deaths: 6 times

Special Status: “Oni Pressure”: Magic is reduced by 100 times the difference between levels of the caster and target. Until caster is defeated, cannot be healed.

==========

==========
Hamakaze Shuri Class: Higher Slave Level 57

Stamina: 2000

Magic: 1750 -> 28

Physical: 1900

Endurance: 1000

Agility: 980

Special Ability: “Auto-heal” Heals 300 Stamina every 10 minutes.

“Loyal Heart”: When the master’s life is at danger, all Statuses increase by 1.5x.

Special Status: “Higher Slave” Owner: Katsuragi Daichi
Seals all abilities against him until release.

“Oni Pressure”: Magic is reduced by 100 times the difference between levels of the caster and target. Until caster is defeated, cannot be healed.

==========

Magic reduction… It's a mental attack, huh. It's also not healable. What kind of skill is that?!

"You get it? You didn't lose yours (magic), so you have the around the same strength as I do, right? I want a simple one-on-one fight."

It's a bit off, but for me it's a good thing. My Magic is reduced by a thousand. I can't use Imperial-magic.

Is it saying that I have to fight a Level 74 with Spirit and Soul-rank magic?

Me alone.

"Don't be absurd. If I'm fighting, then it'll be together."

"Together? I've been saying that she's useless. Does she have any tricks up her sleeve?"

With the small talk, I try to buy time. I got to think of a new strategy.

…An ace in the hole. For me, it's "Revenge of the Resented".

…Do I die here?

No, that's not a good idea. There's no one to retrieve my body.

If I can move Hamakaze with "Absolute Order", can I get away?

I can't just leave her.

If Hamakaze dies, it's the end. Even if my body dies and revives, it takes time. The Oni might just keep killing me over and over.

In the end, I have no choice but to fight.

The Oni glared at me.

“Oh, did you figure it out? I waited for you; so make sure I have some fun, alright?

“It’s not something to say when you can die at anytime.”

“Aha, just as you said. Well, enough chatting. Shall we?”

“…Ah, let’s.”

I smacked my cheeks together, and got myself ready.

I left Hamakaze in a safe place, and walked into the Oni’s room.

At that instant, the Oni approached.

“Kuh!”

I blocked a punch with my crossed arms. I lowered my knees so that I wouldn’t get blown away.

“Huh? You didn’t get blown away.”

“Thanks to you, I’m also pretty strong!”

I grabbed her fist, and threw it up. The Oni rolled over and landed. She struck with the sword in her right hand.

“Tch!”

She swept at my legs. I lost my posture, and she started casting magic.

“Ogre Flame!”

“Hwaa!?”

Casting quicker than usual, the flame orb attacked me. I couldn't dodge, and flew back from the direct hit.

"Gah!!"

My body hurts. I slammed the wall.

I took damage, but now I'm just burning up. That fireball was pretty hot. It's as if my throat is burning up. I'll get covered in flames.

"Spirits of Water, give me your blessing! Water Ball!"

Casting Water magic, I shot it at myself to douse the flames.

"Gah, Gugh!"

When I lost focus she came up and kicked me in the stomach. It was a blow comparable to Samejima, and it wasn't just that which surprised me.

My body was floating. I slammed the ceiling.

"I'm not waiting any longer!"

The same slice as before.

I can't dodge it!

"Spirits of the Wind, cut through the sky! Wind Slice!"

I was at least able to resist with the wind's blade.

"Ugh!!"

It was a pincer attack between shock and pain. The feeling on my flesh, it was as if I was being burned alive. I'm about to burst into tears. I bit my lips and endured it as hard as I can.

Looking down I see the sword striking upwards.

That's bad, that's bad, that's bad!

"Dieeee!"

"Not this time!!"

I pushed my muscles to the limit, and somehow was able to dodge it. My cheek sliced across the blade, and blood splattered out.

It missed!

I took the opportunity and used my momentum to dropkick her.

"Uraaaa!"

"Well done! But, that's too weak!"

The Oni stopped it easily with its slim hand.

"No way!?"

"Uuuraaa!"

The Oni grabbed my leg and smashed me into the ground.

"Kha-!?"

My chest hurts. I can't breath very well. My right leg broke. It's bent into a weird shape. The fractured bone came out of my skin.

The electrical pain surged through my body.

“Ahhhhhh!”

“You’re a tough one, huh!”

The Oni stabbed me with its blade. I rolled and dodged around, but I’m about to drop. I ended up leaning on the Oni.

This… This pain is unbearable. That’s it… Quickly, quickly!

“Kill me!”

The sudden death wish made wrinkles in the Oni’s brows.

“Shut up!”

The Oni tried to pull me away, but my highest Physical stat didn’t let me down.

“Kill me! Quickly! Kill!”

“Aahh, I’ll kill you already, so get off me!”

“With your sword! With magic! Just kill me!”

“Shut up, you brat!”

As I looked at the Oni’s hand, she casted “Ogre Flame.”

I couldn’t care less about the heat anymore. Now all I want is to get killed. Before my conscious fades away… Quickly…

In my eyes I see the death goddess. It’s not the Oni.

Before I kick the dirt, I pulled her robe one more time.

“Kill me…!”

I coughed up blood.

“Aah, with pleasure!”

Reacting to the voice, the death goddess swung her scythe.

Looking at it, I laughed.

“…I won.”

The Oni stopped moving her sword.

She was attacked. It should be.

From her chest, a knife was stabbed.

“W…What…!?”

“Wind!”

A hole ripped through her chest.

Blood rained down. She can’t hold her blade any longer.

Right behind the Oni was the key to this battle.

“I’msorryI’msorryI’msorryI’msorryI’msorryI’msorryI’msorry”

The black-haired slave holding a blood red dagger, my loyal servant, Hamakaze Shuri.

“I said it… didn’t I? We’d fight… together.”

I did say it. I never meant to fight alone.

I always meant for Hamakaze to fight with me.

"…I thought… it was… one-on-one…", said the Oni, writhing in pain. That attack must've hurt.

"I don't care. As long as… I win."

"Dammit…"

The Oni fell to the ground. I also fell.

"You… Now, I shall give you… new life. I shall give you a second life. Here, sign a contract with me, and fulfill your duty… as my servant. "Wight King"…"

I used the last of my strength to cast the incantation on the Oni.

…Ah- Dammit. I can't move, and it hurts all over. I lost a lot of blood, and my eyelids are getting heavy. My body is cold.

I guess I'm dying again… I'm dying again…

…Well, at least, it was alright…

I won over a stronger being. I fought with my full strength, learned a lot of new things, used many different tricks, and grasped victory.

Even at this time… I feel uplifting.

…When I return to life I'll praise Hamakaze.

Feeling such success for the first time, I died.

Chapter 12 - “Hero”

This is the second time I’ve seen this darkness. Coming here twice in one day- it’s not my day, even though I’m feeling pretty good.

“And? Are you going to kill me again?”

I tried to turn my head towards the one who tried to kill me before. Oh? I can’t move my head. Then, my body… Nope, I can’t move.

“No,”

Unlike before, the girl denied, and made a smile.

“Thank you.”

“…Huh?”

The unexpected gratitude made me make a stupid sound.

“Thank you, I’m grateful.

“No no no! You saying that makes me all the more unsafe!”

“Thanks. Really, thank you.”

This time, she lowered her head.

…What is this. What a weirdo.

…But, she might not be a bad person as I thought she was.

After that traumatic experience… This time I'll act more mature!

"Thank you."

"It's fine, don't worry about it."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Then, die."

"Ah…. Ah?

The girl flipped her attitude as I let my guard down, and my conscience snapped.

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…The worst way of waking up. Why do I have to go through that dream every time I die?

Next time I'll definitely return the favor.

I swear.

"…Are you awake, Daichi?"

I opened my eyes to the voice I'm used to hearing, and the two hills popped up.

…They're huge. This is the first time I've seen them from this angle.

No, it's a wonder- what am I saying, dammit…

"…Hamakaze."

“Yes, what is it?”

“…Are you using your lap as a pillow again?”

I can feel a soft sensation on the back of my head. This feeling is something I experienced before.

Hamakaze’s, a classmate’s healthy thighs.

A popular girl in the class, which has become my slave.

If I think of it that way, I should be happy.

“Yes. I thought you would be happy if I did…”

Her cheeks turned pink, and she gave a delicate smile.

…How weird… Hamakaze seems to be a lot cuter than before.

…It’s so tense up in here.

“..Ah well. Let me be like this for a bit.”

“Are my thighs that comfortable?”

“… Not at all…”

I turned over. She had a little giggle.

She definitely figured it out that I was trying to hide my blushing face.

Also, Hamakaze started stroking my head.

After that fight to the death, it feels very nice and soothing. Do women have this level of tolerance?

I've never touched or talked to another girl… What am I trying to do, bullying myself?

Not doing it before, I got up and put Hamakaze's head on my lap.

"U-um, Daichi?"

"…"

I ignored the bloodstains and brushed my hand through her clean, black hair.

Going this far, she tried her best.

"…Daichi,"

"What?"

"I'm… very happy."

"…I- I see."

Stop it, it's too much for me, whose had little to no experience with others. I couldn't look her in the face.

"…Hamakaze."

"What is it?"

"After getting out, I'll do one thing that you want me to do, so think about it."

"…Yes."

Just like a romantic comedy, someone was looking at us with the cold shoulder.

"…Ah, so you were here."

The red Oni looked at us. Her crimson eyes, staring at me.

"What the hell do you mean, 'you were here'!?"

The Oni seems annoyed that I forgot its presence, and puffed up her cheeks.

"I'm joking. I can't forget the person who killed me."

I shrugged. I couldn't forget.

"I killed you once, that was easy."

"Don't be kidding me!!"

The Oni punched the ground.

"You killed me once! That's it! I was dead!"

The Oni tossed away her robe.

The bare Oni's body. The hole that was supposed to be in her body sealed up, and she asserted it.

"My body went back to as it was! Even though I should've been dead, I'm alive right now! What did you do to me?"

"What? Do you prefer being dead?"

"Dying honorably after losing is our rule!"

"I don't care."

“Huh!?”

The Oni who lost but was left alive got mad at us.

Maybe, she might come at us. Well, not at me, at least.

That’s because, she’s mine now.

“You’re my slave now.”

“…Huh? Me, a slave? I can’t believe that-”

“Then, look at your Status.”

“Don’t kid me. If you’re lying… you… No wait…”

“Just check.”

“…Open.”

Her information appeared.

==========
Akina Leadred Class: Higher Slave Level 74

Stamina: 5200

Magic: 3800

Physical: 6700

Endurance: 2900

Agility: 4000

Unique Ability: “Oni Pressure”: Magic is reduced by 100 times the difference between levels of the caster and target. Until caster is defeated, cannot be healed.

“Ogre Flame”: Uses 100 Magic. Fires a Royal-class fireball.

“Curse of the Demon God”: Able to stop serving a Hero. Loses 1000 for all statuses, and makes you unable to use magic.

Dismissal requirements have been met.

Dismiss? yes/no

Special Status: “Higher Slave” Owner: Katsuragi Daichi
Seals all abilities against him until release.
==========

“…You’re kidding me…”

The Oni widened her eyes, and looked at the screen deeply. It wasn’t an enraged look, and sat cross-legged deep in thought.

“That means… Wait, if that’s so…”

For a bit, she mumble. Suddenly, her shoulders were shivering. No, Akina Leadred. Even I’m shocked over here.

Why does she have Unique Abilities instead of Special Abilities like me?

“Oi, Leadred. There’s something I want to ask…”

And, I stopped.

Leadred lightly giggled. Gradually it became louder, and it she blurting things out.”

“I see… This guy… The hero is… Hahaha! Interesting! Really interesting! That girl… By a human… Hahahaha!”

Leadred, laughing, while smacking my knees.

“Hey, you hero!”

“W-What is it? I don’t want to hear that you don’t want to be my slave.”

I panicked after getting called out so suddenly.

If I pull out, my presence as the master would cease. But, that quickly met an end.

“No! I’ll gladly serve you! But, before that, so that I’ll recognize you as my true master, answer me one question!”

True master…? What is she saying?

Even without doing anything she’s already my servant.

Her way of speaking also changed… Maybe her head didn’t regenerate properly?

While thinking about it, I affirmed her request.

“You! Do you have the Unique Ability “Revenge of the Resented”?”

“–!!”

I trembled.

What does this mean? Why does she know my skill!? Did she look at it!? Can she even see it!?

…Wait, calm down!

In my head, I'll take the safest option. Leadred is my slave in the first place. She can't attack me.

If she'll fight with us, then I'll probably have to talk about it anyway.

It's not like there's any need to fret.

Then, she'll declare her obedience. I'll make sure she'll recognize me as her true master.

There should be no problem if I tell the truth.

"…Ah. Indeed, I do have it. You can look at my Status if you don't believe me."

"I see… Then… You are…"

Leadred walked towards me.

In any case, there's no need to fear.

Leadred sat in her place, and placed her head to her knees.

"I… I have been waiting for you. Our hope. The one suitable to lead us-"

And, she said,

"–Guide us, our savior."

Story 1 - Last - “Back to the Surface”

“Me, a… hero?”

“Yes. I was sealed here so that I could serve you.. There are others like me, sealed, waiting for you to release them, as I was told. And then, we shall destroy the human race.”

Ah, crap. My head hurts…

“…Wait a sec.”

I pushed my temples with my hands, restraining myself.

“What’s wrong?”

“I’m still a Hero in the end. Is that OK? I need to put that out first.”

“Yes, I am aware. You are a Hero.”

“Right? Then, I can’t just destroy humanity, right?”

I have no idea what that goddess will do if I do that.

If she snaps she could just end my existence there and then.

“Yes, but as I said that is your goal.”

“I haven’t heard of a hero that wipes out the human race!”

“?”

Leadred tilted her head?@slightly.

…I don't think we're connecting…

She also recognizes I'm a hero. Maybe, her definition of hero is different?

"Leadred."

"Please call me Akina-"

"Leadred. Tell me about the Hero you know."

"…I understand."

Leadred seemed discontent, but she followed.

"The Heroes I know are those that protect us from monsters that cruelly destroy our homes and take our treasures.

Those who bravely fight the enemy head on, and protect their allies.

One who gives us the light of hope, and saves us from the darkness of despair."

From the middle she looked into me with a respectful gaze.

"… I see."

I still don't get it… Leadred's definition of Hero is exactly the same as mine.

…Looks like I'll need to calm down and talk to her again.

…Speaking of which, after she started talking about this hero stuff I forgot something really important.

"Leadred. There's one more thing I want to ask…"

“Hm, if I can answer it.”

“If I head to the lowest floor of the dungeon will I be able to go back to the surface?”

Our true wish is to get out of here and inflict the same pain to Samejima.

The faster I get out, the better.

I mean, I don’t think I can beat someone stronger than Leadred.

“Yes, I’m preparing a transport magic circle.”

“I see! You’re… preparing it?”

Preparing? Not being prepared?

My doubts were quickly cleared.

“This is the lowest floor of Rigal’s Den. And, I’m the protector of this place.”

Contrasting to when she fought, she smiled at me.

“Dungeon Clear. Congratulations, Heroes.”

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“First you struck us. You hit us with Oni Pressure, right?”

“Yes.”

“Hamakaze was really messed up by that. Because of that skill, her spirit broke.”

“But, she moved, right?”

“That’s because of my skill, Absolute Order.”

“Ah, I see!”

Leadred seemed to understand; about us heroes, “Revenge of the Resented”, and also about “Absolute Order”.

“The first time she evaded, Hamakaze was under my order.”

“…At that time I was already in your trap… Impressive.”

“I was scared of dying, though… Well, y’know, I did get my ass handed to me… But that was fine. My role was to keep you distracted. After that, I would somehow give out the order when you wouldn’t notice it.

“So, that screaming was…”

“Yup. It wasn’t me trying to get you to end me. That was so she could hear it, and so that she could stab you and fire off that magic.”

“You tricked me, and killed me. Well done.”

Leadred guided Hamakaze and I to the end of the room.

How do I feel? Great. It’s obvious from me talking about it.

I mean, I just cleared the dungeon. I felt as much pain as I did joy, but it was worth it.

Today is a good day. It should be memorialized. Let’s do that.

Even so that I could enjoy it.

“You seem happy, Daichi.”

“Ah, you noticed?”

“Yes, I know everything you’re thinking about.”

“Hm… Then, try to guess.

Just so you know, after this I want to go eat some food and get some shelter. I want to get some information after resting for a while. I want to ask her for a recommended dungeon. I got a slave slot empty, so I want to get a new strong slave.

“To put it simply, after eating you want to rest. After that, you want to talk to Leadred to figure out the next dungeon to go to. You would want a new slave.”

“Wow, how did you-!?”

So this is telepathy…

After swapping standpoints, there’s a limit to the irony.

“Do I get a reward for guessing right?”

“Of course not… Aren’t you getting carried away?”

“Same goes to you. I’m also happy, being of use to you.”

“…I see.”

“Now that I think about it, I’m grinning like before.

Maybe that’s because of this.

“–Heroes, we have arrived.”

It’s been awhile since I’ve had some trifling chatter.

Leadred turned around, and pulled us into the magic circle.

It was a simple room.

Just a square room with a magic circle.

Just like it was made for transport. I’m a bit anxious…

“Leadred, will this really take us to the surface?”

“Yes. If we cast Teleport it should be fine. Just match it up with my timing. If not, the magic circle will fail, the entrance will seal up, and this dungeon will no longer exist.”

“That’s scary…”

“You have to beat the protector to use this room, so it’s taking everything down with me.”

I see…

That makes sense.

I would make the same trap. After finally being able to head back to the surface, I would drop them down into despair.

I wanna try that to Samejima.

I think I would get along with the one who made this trap.

“Then, everyone. Are you ready?”

“Yes. No problems.”

“I’m fine.”

We made a circle, hand joined around the circle. A magical light filled the room.

Crystals as fine a snow beautifully fluttered about the room, as if it’s blessing us.

“Then, let’s go. 3, 2, 1–”

“Teleport!”

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The blue sky, the white clouds. The shining sun.

No walls, blood scents, and stagnant air.

Looking one way, green fields.

The wind brushed my cheeks.

I’m back… From that hell.

I’m back!

The feeling of stirred inside me.

Putting that into form, I screamed out.

“I’m baaaack!!”

It’s been 11 days since I came here, and 4 days since I’ve been thrown away by my classmates.

After dying seven times– I cleared the dungeon.

Forsaken Hero

- Story 2 -

Dungeon – Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep

Chapter 1 - 『*Sincerely*』

Two goddesses exist in this world. However, they belong to opposite sides.

Goddess [Claria]. The great goddess who the human race worships. Her appearance is beautiful and it is said she overflows with affection from centuries of sophistication.

Claria's opposite goddess.

Her name is [Messiah]. The incarnation of evil who rules demons. Carrying out all kinds of brutalities, she would invade and occupy towns. The residents would be struck down and killed to a man.

These two conflicting gods would continue to fight, involving the world.

To defend people, [Claria]. To obtain the world, [Messiah].

Although their abilities rivaled each other's, the tactical balance was skewed by a certain existence.

The hero Terias.

With the strong power gained after receiving the divine protection from [Claria], he went on to defeat demons sent by [Messiah] one after another.

And, finally, the hero and [Claria] managed to seal [Messiah].

Rostalsia has once again regained its peace—.

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“——Fuu……” (Daichi)

I shut the book I was reading just now. I roughly learnt the knowledge of this country and world in this history book.

I was currently on the fourth floor of the royal library. A corner of the corner of history. There was still something I wanted to do before heading to the next dungeon, so I was still in Rostalgia.

The room accommodated three people. Leadred brought a jewel that we sold for money.

After all, a dungeon guardian’s finances are different.

I got the money for the royal library’s required admission from Leadred.

A slave’s things are its master’s things. I don’t have…. to worry… I’m not… worrying…

While reading and struggling with my pride as a man, someone came in and spoke from behind me.

“Daichi-sama, the preparations are complete.” (Shuri)

The girl’s name is Hamakaze Shuri. My memorable number one slave.

Apparently, she seems to have finished the mission I imposed on her.

“Is that so?” (Daichi)

I piled my books up sideways like a mountain and took her hand.

“Okay, guide me at once.” (Daichi)

“… Certainly, allow me to guide you.” (Shuri)

Hamakaze drews her body close.

… Because the feeling was pleasant, I didn't say anything… though it is needless to say that looking away was painful.

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I had promised Hamakaze a reward.

She isn't in the usual adventurer clothes, as she and Leadred have been wearing matching maid outfits recently.

Why maid clothes? When Hamakaze asked, I answered with knowledge of this kind particular to boys.

"… Still, you have strange tastes. For you to want to be with someone like me…" (Daichi)

The wish Hamakaze asked for was『be together for one day』. In other words, she wanted to stay with me.

"Daichi-sama is mean." (Shuri)

"… What?" (Daichi)

"You should know my feelings." (Shuri)

"… I don't know them." (Daichi)

Recently Hamakaze has taken a rather aggressive attitude when it comes to that. Also why is it I need to know your feelings, understand mine.

I have a body that can be discarded at any time.

It's this thought that is exacerbated by her right now. I've been down this road before.

Play a clown so that I'm not disliked. Suffer through wearing many masks.

This physical contact with her is part of it. So it shouldn't be strange that above all, the painful one is Hamakaze.

Nevertheless, I can't free myself from the chains of this dilemma.

For me, it is because I am doing things like this.

"… Huh? What are you doing? Don't hesitate because today we are going out." (Shuri)

"… That's right… Yeah" (Daichi)

I stopped talking. However, she just looked at me and kept talking.

"I actually only want to go to one place. Truthfully I wanted to go there from the beginning with Daichi-sama." (Shuri)

"Then wouldn't the reward 『to go there』 have been good?" (Daichi)

"No, because then my efforts would have been wasted." (Shuri)

"…Hey, don't be shameless." (Daichi)

"Daichi-sama may have stopped caring about me." (Shuri)

… Because it might have been like that, I wasn't able to reply immediately.

"Well, it's fine. So, where is it? Say it." (Daichi)

"… You won't refuse?" (Shuri)

“I won’t break my promise, come on and say it.” (Daichi)

“I see… I want to go to….” (Shuri)

She somehow put on a lonely smile and said where.

“—the royal palace.” (Shuri)

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After coming here, all I saw was doom and gloom. Here I suffered alone and was thrown out to be eaten.

The beginning of everything.

The royal palace of Rostalgia.

Hamakaze and I stood in front of the gate.

“Seeing this again, it still looks huge.” (Daichi)

Towering over its surroundings, it had been made to withstand considerable attacks.

There was no response. With no one around, the air was suffused in silence.

“……..” (Shuri)

She was just staring at one point.

I didn’t know where that point was, and thought that I didn’t need to know.

“……..” (Shuri)

She just stood there in absolute silence.

Like a puppet with no soul.

A trickle of tears ran down her cheek.

What was she thinking about? Normally, it wouldn't be weird for her to be here. At the dungeon, I think she swore her loyalty to me from her fear of 『Dying』.

She may only have goodwill for me because she thought it was necessary for her to live and get her revenge.

So, when she said she wanted to come here I thought 『Ah, it was like this after all』. I reacted cooly.

"—…" (Daichi)

My chest hurt.

Though only a short while had passed, it felt very long. She slowly turned to me.

"……Daichi-sama." (Shuri)

"……What is it?" (Daichi)

"….. I, I think you need to come here." (Shuri)

"….. Why?" (Daichi)

『Because we were seen.』

Anyway, I was just thinking this kind of thing.

However, such an expectation was betrayed.

“—-Because I understood that my feelings were real.” (Shuri)

Hamakaze was smiling.

She ran to and hugged me, causing me to stand there surprised.

My frozen thoughts began to finally move again.

“… Hamakaze?” (Daichi)

“I saw Samejima from the gate.” (Daichi)

“….. So you are saying your feelings for him are real and the ones for me are not?” (Daichi)

When I said that, Hamakaze’s guesses by my jittery eyes.

“You’re kidding… right? … Perhaps, are you disowning me?” (Shuri)

Though it changed into a smile that was like teasing immediately.

“No… It’s just, well… I don’t want to cause a huge misunderstanding by saying something suggestive like『Hmm? Are you perhaps interested in me?』like I have done in the past.” (Daichi)

After becoming very sad, it was surely my misunderstanding. The sympathy sent through that glance was surely my misunderstanding.

“Anyway, if you don’t like me who on Earth would?” (Daichi)

“… With all due respect, that is rude, Daichi-sama.” (Shuri)

“That’s… well, you know?” (Daichi)

“Yes. However, I like that sort of Katsuragi.” (Shuri)

“————-” (Daichi)

A surprise confession.

Moreover, my mind stopped functioning.

“I know that it is selfish to say. However, please hear me.” (Shuri)

Her small eyes caught mine.

“Somehow, even when Katsuragi complains you do so kindly, even if speaking ill of something.” (Shuri)

“That is in your imagination. You should take that back while there is still time.” (Daichi)

“I will become stronger so that I won’t die in order to help the Katsuragi that I like.” (Shuri)

“I only wanted a strong piece. Hamakaze was thinking things like that?” (Daichi)

“Choosing to play a bad role purpose, Katsuragi gave me a reason to live.” (Shuri)

“It’s not like that… I…” (Daichi)

My mouth was held closed by her finger.

“No matter what you think Katsuragi, it is unrelated. Because my feelings won’t change.” (Shuri)

She brought her face close.

…. This beautiful face I’ve seen many times.

With cheeks that looked like they were dyed like red plums and round eyes that were moistened with tears. Soft pink lips and smooth flowing black hair.

A resounding hot gaze. Close enough that I could hear her breath. Our noses touched.

Then our lips.

“I love you, Katsuragi.” (Shuri)

She kissed me a second time, it was sweet.

Chapter 2 - 『*Fate*』

"….. Hamakaze, you…"

….. I wonder if I should believe her….? No, it is different. One by one, it isn't good to think about these kinds of things.

It what way would it be good to suspect the person that is giving you goodwill.

"….. Would you accept me?"

She asks again.

It is good that I don't hear it as rustic.

It is being requested by her. I am asked this for the first time by someone.

——It's not unpleasant, it is different. I don't want a reason. Don't try to make up an excuse. I understand.

To me, this girl…. She is an important person.

"Shuri."

I pat her head, moving my hand along her hair, ending on her shoulders.

I can feel her trembling under the tips of my fingers. It is strained. Though, it might be that I am trembling.

"……"

Hamakaze shut her eyes. I understand what she expects.

She is waiting.

Waiting for my approach.

"…….. Shuri."

"……. Nn."

This time, I will kiss her. I bring my face close——–.

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We left from the royal palace, visiting a large commercial district of the kingdom.

Everyone is full of life and the vigor is definitely overflowing. There are many guests in the shops, and it seems to prosper considerably.

An armor shop in particular is especially showing the upsurge.

Rumors spread about the heroes whom the country summoned returning from floor 51 of [Rigal's Den] covered in wounds.

The existence of the monster house trap room seems to have spread, too; skilled adventurer's preparing a group for [Rigal's Den] start to get ready for entering.

Their motive is clear. In order to server the country, use the heroes as a strategy guide for the dungeon.

Well, the dungeon guardian there is already my slave.

I go to Shuri while desperately holding in my laughter.

“As one would expect, there are indeed many commodities.”

With star like eyes that are sparkling, Shuri’s eyes glance from here to there.

After all, girls really do like shopping don’t they?

“Daichi-sama! Let’s go around slowly after this!

“Ah, I got it, I got it. We have money, too. I’ll buy you something.”

“Hai!”

There are a lot of men. In other words, I who walked with a maid gathered cursing looks from others.

“Oi, you there. You brought a good woman, huh? Isn’t life shor—?!”

I bought everything. With such plain provocation, I took everything that seemed to be worth it. When they sold out, Hamakaze gave off a very pleased face.

The benevolence! I wanted to shout, but didn’t. This has happened before.

To think that just as I reach my hand out to my splendid woman it ends.

“Daichi-sama, we’ve arrived.”

“Oh, the adventurer guild…..!”

Hamakaze and I had come to the adventurer’s guild. This was our original purpose. It took two days to get here.

The next dungeon was decided.

“….. Oh.”

A voice of admiration is raise. When passing through the doors, a spectacle was seen.

Inside was a wide room with depth that looked like tavern.

There was a counter made from a tree that separates forward into seven segments with windows in separating them all.

Newcomers register sequentially from the right, search desk, getting a two quest receipts each.

However, that is all. I head straight for the seventh counter『Information Sales』.

“Hello. Can I help you? Would you be looking to buy information today?”

The receptionist quickly fastened her gaze to my eyes. A good professional skill.

Her ears are longer than a human’s with a light blue color a human is incapable of.

Perchance, she might be an elf. Such species truly seem to exist.

“…… Guest-sama?”

The receptionist who watches me who isn’t talking at all sends me a dubious glance.

I immediately respond with the following words.

“My bad, I was impolite. It is because you are very beautiful.”

“Haa……”

“……”

My soul felt like it was shaved off by a cold and penetrating gaze.

Since there is no reason to decrease my favorability, I decided to tell her what I wanted to buy.

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Currently, up to floor 27 is completed. The rate is unfavorable.

It is because the dungeon’s labyrinth is complex and it hard to find the room with stairs.

Furthermore, the walls, they drive your sense of direction mad by appearing as mirror-like crystal.

Named for these reasons, the [Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep].

This is the next dungeon that we have decided to aim for.

After obtaining the map of the labyrinth, we spent some time around the commercial district as I promised earlier.

Dry-goods store, bookstore, grocer, restaurant, retail store, and finally a slave shop.

“Daichi-sama! How about this?”

Shuri was wearing an orange dress by the fitting room.

My first impression of her was innocence. It was easy for me to think that these bright colors suited her.

Though generally it isn't, the height of the skirt being low became a merit. By choosing clothes like the one piece it appealed to purity.

It is a single color, but has somewhat of a gradient towards the bottom; the balance isn't bad.

She twirls on the spot and the skirt dances. I glance at her thin white legs that appear.

Dangerous. This is very dangerous.

I glance up quickly to see her collarbone, to her shoulder line. I begin to have an unbecoming swelling due to her face. Her nape is charmingly glossy from a little sweat.

To be frank, it is lovely.

"…… Daichi-sama?"

"…… It's nothing."

"However, you sat down suddenly….. do you hurt somewhere?"

"N-no. It's just that I don't feel like standing."

Please don't ask why.

"R-really?"

Fortunately, Shuri seems to not understand why.

"Then, buy it with peace of mind. It suits you amazingly. It is worth the cost."

"Y-yes! I want this!"

Shuri ran to where the clerk was at the counter at full speed.

I managed to retain my pride as a man.

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“Ah! It was a good day.”

We who went window shopping, ate rice together, and enjoyed a complete date were heading home to hotel.

“It was good.”

Though I was taken around the city and was honestly exhausted, it seemed to not matter as long as I could hear impressions of the city from Shuri.

“Although, most was just talking with me, were you satisfied?”

After all, I was only going to buy one dress.

Other than talking while walking, we didn’t do much.

“Yeah. No complaints.”

“However, don’t feel reserved if you want something. You’ve earned it.”

“….. Hey, Daichi-sama. You don’t have to buy me things.”

Shuri had a slightly sulky expression and looked a little miffed.

“Though I don’t feel like that, I apologize if I made you feel bad.”

“That apology was good, so please remember.”

Shuri clasped my hand.

“Staying near the girl you like…. you can feel warmth, spending days casually together…. That such a blessing.”

“……”

The force from her hand gripped tighter. Her cheeks reddened, and not from the evening sun.

It might be embarrassing.

I’m too embarrassed.

My body temperature rises.

My heart beat is noisy.

I could look at her forever.

“L-let’s go! Leadred is waiting for us!”

“R-right! Let’s go home to sleep! We need to be up early tomorrow!”

And so, like a gale we hurried to the hotel.

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It becomes night. We are lodging at 『The Moon of Rostalsia』. Two days with morning and evening meals amount to 10,000 Col. We found this place from the adventurer guild’s quest board a little while ago. It is a considerably good hotel.

Subjugate 50 Rigals for 5,000 Col. It’s supposed to be pretty hard work.

Thanks to Leadred’s favor, we are able to stay here.

She is distinguished by her maid outfit.

“Welcome home, Hero-sama, Shuri as well.”

Her tone has returned to normal because I asked her to do so.

All the same, that does not mean I am great. It depends on the person.

Even so, for no special reason she was glad to have a friend. Rather, this is a sure bet.

She wouldn’t budge beyond 『Hero-sama』, but began to understand my side.

“I’m home. Without delay, though it is bad to immediately begin, let’s talk about tomorrow’s dungeon.

“Hero-sama”

Leadred spoke to interrupt.

“Hmm? What is it?”

“Hai. There is actually some information you need.”

She unfolds a sheet of paper that was in her pocket and hands it to me.

Today, she said that she would gather information while concealing her appearance. Something might interfere with the dungeon capture.

This possibility is put into the corner of my mind, and I look over the sentences.

“…… Na.”

About halfway down I was speechless. My hand stopped moving.

It's a lie….. hey, this…… really….

"Ku…. Hahahahaha!!"

It wasn't possible to contain my laughter.

This is hilarious.

It is unbearably interesting.

What sort of revelation from god is this?

"…..Daichi-sama? What is it?"

Shuri looks at my hand from behind. I pass the document from Leadred to her.

"Look at this."

She takes it and looks at the letter.

Then she immediately showed the same reaction.

Hamakaze and I reacted like this to such a thing.

It was the application guidelines for a guard.

However, it is not to guard a wealthy merchant, nor a king.

The object recorded there.

『Hero Guard Request

On the way to the [Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep], looking for those to serve as guards.

Identification not required. Influential people wanted. 』

—-Ominous Hero {{Classmate}}.

Chapter 3 -『Begin Preparations』

“What’s our plan to enslave the heroes?”

“We’ll make the best use of Samejima without killing him. Confine them and kill their companions one after another. They will surely fall into distrust of one another and blame each other.”

“Though unpleasant, after it is killed once, let’s make it into my slave. That will push it to work hard eternally to avenge itself. If it’s a woman it will be fine to sell her to a brothel after we are done with her; it is more than she deserves. This way, she suffers and we kill two birds with one stone.”

““Desu!””

We look at the flyer, our schedule for the future is significantly rearranged.

『The Heroes’ fighting spirit has been lost. They are to get accustomed to the dungeon in order to regain confidence, there is no choice but to capture. Therefore, we are looking for a new guard to cooperate.』

To summarize the story Leadred heard, it is mostly like this.

From the kingdom, in this case guard means『Shield』.

A throwaway in case of an unexpected situation.

The adventurers are also guessing the same thing, it seems that no one has volunteered so far.

In the first place, if you have confidence in your skill enough to guard the Heroes that purposely won't fight you could just aim at the dungeon capture yourself.

Does Ginger understand what is going on around here? If such a request was put out, he must be a foolish king.

The talk is progressing in the direction of where the request was received. I think this request is foolish.

At any rate, we all hold a grudge towards heroes.

"All right, from here on our objective is settled and will be carried out. I am the only one that will take the request. You two must head for the labyrinth. Objections?"

"Huh?! Do I not take it as well?"

"Daichi-sama! What about me?"

"Oh. You aren't even a human to start with, and they know Shuri's face."

"Ku-……. There must be some other way…."

"…. Yeah, I won't be selfish….."

The two withdrew.

Even if they don't change my opinion, there are still important preparations.

The preparations are related to the strategy that I came up with the moment I heard the story. I curse them on a daily basis, and getting revenge on them someday occupies my mind.

This time I will make use of a plan.

Well, there are a lot of things that should be confirmed from Leadred before I can achieve it.

“Leadred, I want to ask you something. Will you answer?”

“Ah, of course. If I know it, ask anything.”

“Is that so? Then, first of all….”

I begin to talk about the revenge scenario I was making in my head. I had her confirm and give advice on a necessary matter in the process and begin to assemble the plan.

Until we make the plan 『Perfect』, we think up and repeat the process.

The final outcome is satisfying, so we went to bed and morning dawned.

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I woke up in the warm sunshine from the open curtains and stretched my body.

Apparently, Shuri seems to have opened them.

“Good morning, Daichi-sama.”

“Ah, good morning.”

I return the greetings while rubbing my eyes.

Though I only slept a short time, carelessness won’t be permitted in the dungeon at all. Furthermore, the dungeon will have an evil environment such as hard floors.

Compared to that, here is a soft bed. There is no life threatening danger either. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that this is heaven.

"You seem to have slept well."

"Well. I think that I can sleep anywhere, except the dungeon for now."

"Well, that's so."

She smiled as she agreed.

…….. Isn't she too splendid?

"……. Ah-"

I embraced her small body. Without resistance, she completely settled into my arm.

My face was buried in her neck. A woman's faint, sweet aroma.

"….. settle down……"

"D-Daichi-sama…. Isn't it bad to act like that today because there is important work…..?"

"I must replenish myself with the Shuri ingredient ahead of time. It gives me courage."

"……. There is no other way."

She seemed to have understood what I wanted to say. Because it is miserable, I did not want to say it…. She took my feelings into consideration. I truly appreciate it.

After that, I continued getting courage from Shuri for about ten minutes.

After breakfast, we separate at the entrance into two groups. Though it is lonely because we won't meet each other for a while starting today, I pat their heads.

"Hero-sama. Let's do our best to reunite and laugh with each other."

"Daichi-sama. I wish you good luck."

"Ah. Let's both meet there. Do not overwork yourselves."

"I understand."

"Be relieved, I'll protect us. Well then."

Saying that, the two shoulder their luggage and leave the inn.

After seeing them off until they disappear from sight, I quickly move into action.

The response to the letter I sent to the royal palace yesterday arrived, I am to be examined this morning.

I think they want to try my abilities, so to speak.

I arrive as what seems to be just an adventurer who wields an iron long sword and leather armor. I stored a potion of a medical herb that can cure paralysis and poison in case of emergency.

And now, I are in front of that detestable person—-Ginger.

"Are you the adventurer named Yuji?"

Yuji is the false name I registered at the adventurer's guild yesterday, it wasn't questioned.

By the way, I registered just after shopping. I didn't know it wasn't possible to sell wares if you weren't registered to a guild. Thanks to that, the pages in my dark past have increased once again.

Apart from that, as long as my name is heard, even a similar face seems to be acceptable.

From my standpoint, it is most likely because I am to be the 『Shield』 that will be stepped on.

Maybe then, I just might not be examined. Only fools would recruit like this. It's impossible to do.

"Yes, that's right. I want to help, so I applied."

My abusive language is concealed, acting respectful my lowering my head.

"Umu. Then, show me your power. It is important to inspect your capability."

"With pleasure….. What do you want me to do? Should I use magic?"

"Umu. That's fine. I want to see your power."

"Certainly. Then, let me show you my magic."

Following the scenario that we prepared, I continuously used an Imperial-class magic followed by eight instances of the Spirit-class magic 『Flame bulb』 simultaneously.

According to Shuri's common knowledge of this world and Samejima's abilities, I set mine to be lower in order to avoid suspicion.

I will say that the results were enough to please that foolish king.

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I received the notification of acceptance and was guided by one of the country's martial soldiers. After hearing it, it seems that a sortie was immediately gathered. Moreover, it seems that this soldier was passed on to me to babysit me.

His unfortunate handling aside, it seems the kingdom wants to quickly regain the heroes' dignity.

I said nothing as it is convenient for me.

Walking down the quiet long corridor with the soldier, the contents of the mission are spoken about.

"Right now Daichi is in charge of four heroes. "

"Only four people?"

Thinking about it, that is considerably few. Of the 29, only four….?

"Yes. Many of the heroes felt fear from the demon from the last sortie…. Most have held on to the sickness in their mind."

"….. those guys are pathetic."

The demons ate me because of you guys.

It's no good. I'm excessively angry. I endure it and clench my fist.

"…… And so? These four aren't ill?"

"Yes. Ten of the heroes are fine. The others are divided into three groups in order to acquire the experience efficiently. As for the group Daichi is in charge of, the balance is composed well."

“Is that so? That’s too bad.”

“No, such a thing….. Ah, here. We’ve arrived.”

“Understood. I’ll go now ….. yeah. I’m off to finish my preparations.”

Saying so, I drive away the soldier with my hand.

“Certainly. Then, excuse me.”

He retraced his path after bowing, not seeming to care about my impoliteness.

…… was I exposed?

Slight uneasiness ran through my chest, though it went away.

“…… Well.”

I stand in front of the door and confront it. If I open this, they are there.

They completely humiliated me and threw away Shuri.

….. This morning, Shuri gave me a part of her strength….. it’s alright. I won’t fail.

I stare at the doorknob.

Fuu. I exhale.

“…..I’m coming in.”

The knob is turned and the door opened.

Coming into sight is a man with black hair and a glasses girl with blonde hair tied into pigtails.

Samejima didn’t appear to be there.

However, that is fine.

He will be the one to receive the best suffering.

It is more interesting if the main event is saved for last.

Though, I’ll play with these guys first.

Starting from here—-the curtain rises on our revenge tragedy song {{Opening}}.

Chapter 4 - 『Improvised Party』

“You’re our guard this time, Yuji?”

The only male in the party talked to me.

He’s someone that I remember well.

He belongs to Samejima’s entourage.

He looks to have not changed at all. An average height and build, a natural Japanese man all in all. Rather, have you not gotten fatter?

Evidence that he didn’t bother with daily training. It seems that Umahara has been lazy.

“Umahara-kun, it’s rude to speak like that! I’m sorry, please overlook his behavior.”

As for the girl—Tamaki Yui—it seems that she misunderstood my lack of a response since I was in a bad mood.

She is the class chairman, a volunteered peacemaker. To put it bluntly, she assisted in bullying me and promoted it.

As I recall, it became fine to bully me because she was popular with the teachers and others in the school.

….. Wait. Didn’t I have human rights? ….. I don’t want to think about it. This feeling is building fast.

Regardless, there are people in front of me.

“It’s fine, I don’t mind. I am Yuji, an adventurer. For now, I give you my regards.”

I hold out my hand and say so to shake hands with them. One by one, the girls introduce themselves.

“H-Hayase Fuuko. P-pleased to meet you.”

“Minamoto Kureha.”

“Tamaki Yui, thank you very much!”

Even in class, Hayase was a complete shadow, so her name matches her appearance. She was an innocent bystander. She never acted violently towards me….. As you would expect, I do not wish to kill her.

She’ll be given a role to play. The pieces begin to fall together in my head.

The Yankee with imitation blonde hair confronts me. She is the leader of the group that follows Samejima. The amount of times I’ve suffered from her foot are beyond count. Therefore, I decided she’ll receive capital punishment.

“Ah, my best regards. Though it is fast, we are to form a sortie. Will you inform me of the party’s composition before we begin? I would like to understand.”

“Minamoto-san and I are the vanguard, with Umahara-kun and Hayase-san in the rear. I give the orders.”

I see, a typical composition. Before Umahara was in front of Hayase, she was on standby like me.

“Quite a good composition. I won’t have to think much on it.”

“Yes, thank you.”

“I can easily survive by defending. Then, let’s go to capture the dungeon.”

“Hai! Let’s descend!”

“Shall I show you my power?”

“Y-yes……”

“……. Tch.”

My former classmates leave the room in succession.

Ah, let’s face it. That place will become your grave.

While snickering in my mind, I follow them out.

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Nothing happened on the way there. While everyone was talking on the way, I spent the time in tension. This isn’t the same as [Rigal’s Den].

Learn from experience, guys…. I was amazed at the situation, though at least it let me organize what I found out.

First of all, their special abilities.

Umahara’s 『Process Replication』 allows him to spend his MP to temporarily make any magic his own and reproduce it.

Minamoto’s 『Variation Sword』 allows her to change the hardness of her sword and its length, up to 8 meters.

Hayase's 『Grand Library』 is a non-combat ability. Once she learns something, she will remember it for eternity. Something that could be useful at any time.

Tamaki's 『Witch of Freezing』 increases the effect of her ice magic by one stage. However, it cannot exceed the God-class.

Although everyone had an imbalanced power, I was most frightened of Tamaki's ability. Spirit-class magic would become Soul-class magic and Soul-class would become King-class magic.

This was good to know in advance because although there is a big level difference we might take some damage in the worst case. Shuri can only use a few Soul-class spells.

Incidentally, since I was given 『Steel Heart』, I wouldn't be scratched. Lying to Hayase about this would be a big risk for our trust.

I understand that having status values this high isn't good as it stands out.

Umahara Keito. It is obvious that he likes Tamaki. He hasn't separated from her since we left.

Unfortunately, she's been talking to me to avoid Umahara.

Honestly I don't think she is trying to get on good terms with me, rather she is doing so because she wants me to save her when she's in pinch.

"Um, Yuji-san?"

"What?"

"Why are you going to the [Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep] with us? Wouldn't [Rigal's Den] have been better?"

…. This person, even though I already understand….

I pretend to not understand as we travel and listen to Tamaki.

I want to keep the conversation going. I really don't want to talk to Umahara.

….. Well, I know that he'll do nothing but brag if he gets the chance….

"Right now, it is hard to go to [Rigal's Den] because it is overflowing with adventurers. So, unlike before, the [Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep] became more favorable to train at."

"Heeeh, so there was a reason like that….."

Blah…. Are we going to continue this exchange….?

Since I am getting bored I decide to stop this conversation forcibly.

"Then, we are now exploring the dungeon. Everyone, arm yourselves and tighten formation."

Tamaki and Hayase do as they are told and pull out short swords. It goes without saying, but the other two don't.

They show expressions that say they have no intention of following orders.

"…. Hey, aren't you our guard?"

"Yes, that is so."

"Then , don't tell us what to do."

"……Huh?"

…. These people. Are they so arrogant that they already forgot us dying?

“We’d be fine even without your power. We were only defeated there because we were attacked by so many demons.”

“…… That arrogance will eventually cost you your life, you should stop it.”

“Aren’t you are here to defend us if we are in danger? At that time, give up your life and protect us.”

Sneering, Umahara brandished his staff and went inside.

“Since it’s like that, it’s alright.”

Minamoto follows Umahara inside.

“Aah, you two….”

“I’m sorry, Yuji-san. They are overconfident of their strength…”

We were being left behind.

Flustered, Hayase bows to apologize for Tamaki.

I clap the other two on the shoulder and let out a dry laugh.

“I don’t mind, so don’t worry. Let’s follow them. The monsters in there are stronger than the ones from [Rigal’s Den].”

“Y-yes!”

I acted nice to get them to let down their guard. It seems that they are starting to relax. The tension has been lessened a bit.

“There’s no need to use honorifics with me. I’m as old as you all.”

“Is that so? You seem older…..”

“I get that a lot. Don’t worry though, as your senpai in exploring dungeons I’ll defend you without fail. Follow me.”

I put on as good of a smile as I could. It was hard to smile so much in one day. I’m not used to smiling so much.

“Ah…. Yeah….”

“Please continue doing your escort well, Yuji.”

“Ah, of course.”

I invite the two girls inside as I lead them by the hands.

Chapter 5 - 『Guiding Two Heroes』

A few hours after looking for and catching up to Umahara and Minamoto, we made it to the 20th floor.

I'd say that everything has gone well so far. We encounter a Wight White Lancer.

The Wight is the corpse of a demon that has bleached white bones. As its name suggests, it carries a spear.

Though it has a somewhat higher status, of all its attacks the main one that is troublesome is its『Poison』effect.

When it comes to the poison status effect, it is necessary to use an antidote to cure it.

Minamoto who was hit by it is currently being treated. Because she was fatigued and didn't evade its attack in time, she was struck by the spear during an attack.

"Hey, Minamoto-san. Please drink this."

Hayase passed Minamoto some『Yanu Leaf』, an antidote. She takes it and hurriedly drinks it.

Her complexion quickly improved. Apparently, the effects of the poison were neutralized.

However…..

“Amazing, Hayase.”

“Right?”

Tamaki was the one to respond to the praise. Behind them, Umahara put on a dissatisfied expression.
Come on, this fellow….

“Hayase-san read a large amount of medical documents at the royal palace, so she doesn’t make mistakes with amounts in her treatments. Therefore, we can fight without worrying about status effects!”

Tamaki snapped her fingers and took a pose. In high spirits, aren’t you?

However, Hayase’s value seems to continue increasing.

The medical knowledge in this world is quite lacking and still developing. Though there are physical and magical strength recovery potions, there are many potions for other conditions that haven’t been perfected.

For example, the potency of that antidote–『Yanu Leaf』. It will have negative effects on your health if you take more than you need, such is the risk.

Therefore, you can only take as much as you need at the time.

“Is that so? Hayase’s talent is quite indispensable for this party.”

“T-thank you…..”

After being praised by me, Hayase seemed to shine. Her behavior, I’m definitely not accustomed to it.

“Is Minamoto already alright?”

“Yeah, I’m okay.”

She stands up and moves her body. After stretching, it was obvious the treatment worked.

“It would be good to drink this potion just in case. Oi, here.”

I throw a test tube-like container carrying a potion to Minamoto. She caught it with both hands.

“Because you are a guard….. Don’t expect a thanks.”

Saying that much, Minamoto begins to walk away.

“Ah, oi! …… Good grief….. Tamaki, Hayase, let’s go. Let’s not split up.”

“Ah, yes!”

Hayase quickly stands up and gathers the luggage. There was no response from Tamaki because she had already caught up to Umahara.

Hayase and the two others smoothly ordered into a line like troops, Minamoto in the front, Umahara and Tamaki in the middle, Hayase and I in the rear.

Watching Minamoto, I maintained a distance from her and was talked to.

“Why did Yuji become an adventurer? Though I’m an adventurer, I am useless at fighting them…..”

“Well. There’s no special reason. Since my parents did this…. I sort of did the same.”

“I-isn’t such a simple reason scary?”

“I had no talent for it but it couldn’t be helped. It stopped being so bad when I became familiar with it…. Perhaps, is Hayase afraid?”

She looks at me with eyes that seem to burst with tears at any moment and her body shakes.

Bullseye. I mean, I understand.

“….. that’s it. I don’t think I have the power to fight like you guys. I’m just a hindrance to everyone…. When we get attacked I feel like I’m about to die….. Dying is…… it is scary.”

Dying is scary.

It is the same for everyone.

I’m also afraid. Although I can revive, every time I do my mind becomes cloudy and it is painful to see that strange woman in my dream.

This power might also have its limits and I might not revive. There are so many things I don’t know.

However, nothing will change if I am afraid. I know this firsthand.

“N-no good. Even though I’m a hero I’m weak like this…. I’m sorry, please forget I said anything.”

“I don’t think that.”

I put my hand on Hayate’s head and patted it with a *pon pon*.

“Y-Yuji-san?”

“Everyone starts like that. We are all afraid. It can’t be helped but to feel those things. Because we are alive.”

"….. Is….. that so?"

"Ah, Hayase only needs to put in some effort. Though it might seem cheap, your effort won't be betrayed. Continue on at your own pace. Like that, you will surely become a splendid hero."

"Yuji-san…"

She thinks of something and rubs her eyes with her robe. After, when looking up, the atmosphere around her changed from a while ago.

"Thank you. Somehow, I feel courage."

"That's good."

"It is because of Yuji-san's help. Therefore, um…."

Her fingers suddenly begin to fidget around. She clenches her hand and grabs mine.

"U-um!"

"Hmm? What?"

"Yuji….. are you seeing anyone?"

Shuri's smiling face crossed my mind. Though I'm not sure if our relationship counts, it would be embarrassing to say yes.

"I don't."

"T-then when I become a hero… we—"

"Increasingly lovey-dovey, aren't you guys?!"

Taking advantage of the situation, Tamaki broke away from Umahara's restraint and came over.

To state her intention of participating in our conversation, she used a loud voice.

"H-h-huh!? Tamaki-san, what are you saying!! I wasn't saying anything in particular like that!!"

Hayase waved her hands and shook her head, blushing deeply.

…… ah.

I'm bad, though I'm not a thickheaded protagonist I didn't realize.

"……. Oi, Yuji-san? How does it feel to be liked by a cute girl?"

She uses her elbow to nudge Hayase's melons. This person…. Seriously.

"It's good that Yuji-san is treating Hayase-san kindly…. Maybe I'll also aim for Yuji-san~."

Tamaki crosses her arms to show off.

This is entirely unpleasant.

I understand her trick, there's no goodwill to me at all. My heart isn't throbbing, either.

It's all because something bad might happen to you while we're here.

"…… Oi, guard."

……. Ah, it came.

However, it was good timing. The location is good.

Let's use this guy's emotions.

"Get away from Tamaki, I dislike it."

Umahara's eyes look like peep-holes. Is love blind?

"Ah, yeah. That's fine."

"So you get it. Hurry up then."

"However, you do so as well."

"What….!?"

Umahara glares at me like a demon. Though in the past I would have shrunk back from this, I'm not even afraid of the real thing now.

"Think back. Tamaki's expression when she was talking with you compared to when she was talking with us."

"Hah? She seems to be fine with me no matter what you think. Right, Tamaki?"

"Ahahaha….."

Tamaki forced a smile and looked around, averting her eyes.

Understanding her meaning, Umahara's face became red with anger.

"……. Youuuuu……!"

He directed his anger towards me. Well, to him it seems like I took Tamaki away from him. A very unjust and selfish interpretation.

An explosive situation.

“Oi! The stairs room was found! It is a monster house!”

“““Tsu!?”””

『Monster House』

One of the things I didn’t want to hear from these people.

Though all of us showed our reactions to it, Umahara recovered first.

“Just you wait, Tamaki! I’ll knock all of them down!”

“Ah, wait a moment!?”

Ignoring Tamaki’s restraint, Umahara ran off. Minamoto follows.

He probably just wants to show off a good side to her. I understand this guy well, guys like him don’t make things easy.

“You two wait here! I’ll protect them!”

“M-me too!”

“No! There won’t be any room for me to protect Hayase while fighting in a monster house. You play an important role in treating our wounds. Wait here.”

“O-okay….”

“Tamaki, defend Hayase. You’ll be fine if it is just here.”

“U-understood!” [Tamaki]

I confirm they’ll stay and then run after him.

I'll be troubled if Tamaki and Hayase die. And not because I'm getting paid.

Since they were running, I picked up my speed; Minamoto and Umahara stopped in front of the door.

Umahara's shoulders were moving up and down, he must have also just arrived.

"I've seen this pattern. If my memory is correct, it is probably the same as that time."

What Minamoto says is correct.

This magic circle is the same as the one at the monster house in【Rigal's Den】.

Not just anyone can draw one.

Not unless you were the lord of a dungeon, for example.

"What do we do? Go in?"

"Of course. Nothing in a monster house is scary if you understand it beforehand!"

Umahara stands by with magic. Minamoto pulls out her sword.

"Oi, you. Don't interfere. Help only if you think it is dangerous."

Umahara warns me.

"I got it. Tamaki is watching, so struggle your best to show off."

"Tch……! Minamoto, let's go!"

“I got it. You don’t need to tell me again.”

As the door is opening Umahara is enthusiastic.

Then, they stiffened.

“Eh?”

“Ah?”

It is very different than what they expected.

Humans are weak to sudden, unanticipated events.

Haste, assessment of the situation, doubt.

Those will affect your ability to take action.

Therefore, I pushed them into the room.

“Ah—“

“Na—“

Now, they are in the room.

Within killing range of the red demon.

There isn’t a lot of demons.

Just one.

“——Kill them, Leadred.”

At my instruction, the horned demon gives a wicked smile.

“—–My pleasure.”

She swings her large sword.

Chapter 6 - 『*Killing*』

In order to kill, the attack was so fast that it was invisible. Minamoto activated her special ability and raised the hardness of her sword to the maximum in order to deflect the blow.

However, her right arm was severed.

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!!”

The sounds of her last moments. Still, the demon doesn’t wait.

“Ogre Flame.”

Ten King-class flame bulbs emerged and floated in the air. At the wave of her hand, Leadred shot them all at once.

“Spirits of water! Become the shield that defends me! Water Wall!”

Umahara instantly put up a shield, though the attack was not stopped by the Soul-class magic. The blaze poured over Umahara after piercing through his protective wall.

“Uahhhhhhhh!!”

“Kiyaaaaa!?”

This is the room from【Rigal’s Den】, the stair room in the undermost floor. It was impossible for Minamoto and Minami to win.

Even I was at a tie with Leadred. Those who have not even reached my status should not be able to win.

This situation has proven that.

“Haa! Haa!”

“It hurts, it huuurts…..!”

Umahara is barely well enough to use magic. However, he is breathing heavily and has already reached his limit. A pathetic individual.

Minamoto has lost her fighting spirit. Yep. It is because she lost her dominant arm from the elbow down.

“Oi oi…… Maybe this time, damnit….”

Shouldering her sword covered with blood, the demon approached. Raising both of her eyes, she releases a brutal atmosphere.

“Damnit! Water Spirits!–”

“『Demonic Pressure』”

Leadred invokes her special ability before Umahara finishes chanting.

Using the magic caused Umahara to run out of gas.

“W-what….. gwah!?”

Unable to use magic, Umahara was knocked out of her sight with incredible power.

When he hit the wall, he vomited and crumbled.

“You’re filthy, oi.”

Leadred grabbed Umahara by the hair and threw him to the wall near me.

Fainting, the hero carelessly collapsed so I used some light restoration magic on him.

“Uu…..ah.”

“You know this is your graveyard, right Umahara-kun?”

“Wha-w-what……!?”

Something landed near Umahara. There was a sound of collapsing debris. Minamoto’s head hung limp.

“He-…a-…M-Minamoto….?”

Unable to stand from fear, Umahara crawled to her like a baby.

However, the demon stopped him by coming from the sky.

“Ah-! You recovered!”

“Aheee-!?”

Umahara’s eyes crossed and he lost consciousness.

Being able to do that much and unable to use magic, it was a justified reaction. Besides, a little while ago I recall feeling the same.

“Hero-sama.”

“Ah, I got it. Spirits of light, grant us serenity. Magic Heal.”

I recited the spell to heal Umahara and wake him up.

Before he was able grasp the situation, Leadred kicked him.

“Ogoh….”

Ah, that broke some bones. One, maybe two seem to have broken.

“Leadred. I’ll handle this guy and entrust Minamoto-sama to you. Ah, and killing her is no good. Just beat her up.”

“I understand.”

Leadred was obviously enjoying herself. Maybe she was defeated by a hero in the past and treated like Minamoto is now.

“…… Well, should I kill him now?”

Drawing my long sword, I thrust it into Umahara’s foot so that he won’t run away.

“Aah–!?”

His hazy consciousness seems to have be replaced by extreme pain. He was already sloppily crying.

I use my foot to trample on his head, pushing down and grinding against it.

“So? How does it feel to kiss the ground?”

“W-why…… why are you doing this!!”

My question was answered with another question.

“What are you doing, answering my question with another question? Didn’t you learn to not do that in elementary? …. Well, that’s fine. I’m feeling good, so I’ll tell you. Open.”

I remove my foot and pull him by his hair, showing him my status screen.

“Y-you….Y-You’re Katsuragi……?”

“Yeah, the Katsuragi Daichi that all of you have bullied for a long time. With this, do you understand my reason?”

I pull the sword out and bring it to his neck. Understanding what I said, Umahara bowed desperately for his life.

“I-I’m so sorry! I had no choice but to do that stuff!”

“Why?”

“It’s because Samejima was targeting you! I-I didn’t want to do such a thing! I’ll apologize as much as it takes! So, please excus—bu!?”

I struck the top of his head with an axe kick.

“Shut up…… well? Still spitting out lies? Then, wouldn’t Hayase who hasn’t done anything also be Samejima’s target?”

“T-that’s…..”

Umahara started sputtering. He’s likely thinking what to use has his next excuse. Worthless.

“It’s already fine. Die.”

“P-please wait! Please…. Please spare my life! I-I’ll do anything!”

Umahara clinged to my foot in desperation.

Laughable. I’m quite happy.

So, I proposed something.

“Is that so….? I want you to let me violate Tamaki. That will prove your innocence.”

“T-that is….”

“If you don’t want to, then die?”

I pricked his shoulder with the tip of my sword. Umahara shook his head.

“I’ll do it, I’ll do it! Please, let me do it…!”

His desperation was revolting. In exchange his your life, he’ll give up his love…. he’d so anything to save himself.

Well, seeing his appearance like this is pretty fun.

“…….It can’t be helped. Alright. I’ll keep you alive.”

“T-thank you so much…..”

Umahara made a relieved expression after guaranteeing his life. He is thoroughly reflecting on the joy that is life.

“….. Hey, stand up.”

“….. Y-yes.”

I stretched a hand towards Umahara as it didn’t seem like he’d be able to stand up by himself. He took my hand and stood up.

——While I simultaneously stabbed him in the stomach with my sword.

“……..Eh? Ah?”

It seems that Umahara doesn't understand the situation yet.

"W-why……I-I was cooperating……"

"Ah. That, I lied."

I replied with a smile. I pulled the sword out and it landed on Umahara's back with a light plop.

"A…a…lie?"
"Yeah. Unfortunately, I already have a special female. Tamaki holds no appeal for me now…… did you think I was serious?"

"No….. way….."

In one go, his hope disappeared and was replaced with despair.

Umahara's expression lost all sense of life.

"Hero-sama. I finished over here. Ah, but, she fainted."

"Got it. Could you bring her over here? Put her near him."

"Nn. Roger."

Using the ripped cloth at the nape of Minamoto's neck, Leadred threw her on top of Umahara. Umahara awakened and you could hear Minamoto groan.

"He….help…."

"P-please…… stop….."

Ignoring their pleas, I prepared to use my sword. I clad my sword's blade in wind type magic since these guys' bodies are easy to tear rip apart with a bit of force.

"Ah. With this I will get some relief—-"

"—–Die."

I make my decision and swing my sword.

Deep red blood and two heads danced in the sky.

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After【Rigal's Den】, half of the classmates withdrew from the front lines. The demons planted extreme fear into their minds.

Then, there's us. With healthy minds we separated into three groups and set forth to capture new dungeons. We hired a guard named Yuji.

He was a pretty weird guy who acknowledged Hayase's inner strength, and laughed off my obvious harassment. He was nice, and even now he is helping Umahara who has been harassing him again and again.

"I wonder if they are safe…..? Everyone……"

"T-they're fine. Yuji-san and everyone are strong."

"……Hmmmm? Only using Yuji-san's name huh?"

"A, t-there was no particular reason."

….. Though she denied it, her face was a deep red….

Hayase-san was perfectly a prisoner to Yuji-san. Well, considering how she is usually treated it probably can't be helped, I think.

With her love of reading and shyness coupled together, I guess it is hard for people to notice that she is kind-hearted. Hayase-san's personality is enjoyable so it should be fine to leave it alone.

……. However……

"They're slow, those three…."

Looking at my wristwatch, one hour has already passed. Well, it does take time to clear a monster house….

…… Or. The worst case scenario comes to mind.

It's was very unpleasant to watch someone die. I lost my best friend in【Rigal's Den】.

Her name was Hamakaze Shuri-chan. Shuri-chan, Nanami and I were the mascots of the class and the three of us were friends that conversed often.

We encouraged each other to work hard to become heroes for this world.

However, on that day…. Shuri-chan was too late to get away. Though Nanami tried to rescue her, it was not possible because she was stopped by Samejima.

However, I don't blame Samejima. Because I also prioritized my life. I didn't even try to help.

"……Tsu."

I shook off those troublesome thoughts with a shake.

….. As you would expect, enduring this damp and humid cave is gloomy.

Everything around me looks the same. The only difference is when I can see myself in the crystals' reflections.

Depressing…..

Just when I was thinking that.

"Ah, Yuji-san!"

Nearby, Hayase-san's voice brightened.

It seems that Yuji has come back. I rushed over to him in a trot.

Hayase-san was smiling gently as her hair was gently brushed. However, unlike before he was covered with wounds and blood.

It seems to have been a considerably close call.

"Sorry, I kept you waiting. I ran into some unexpected difficulties. Are you all right?"

"Y-yes! Because Tamaki-san was keeping watch!"

"That so? Tamaki, thank you."

He gently pats my head.

W-well. With this…. I am embarrassed.

"D-don't treat me like a child! Stop patting my head!"

After saying that while embarrassed, he laughs.

"Ah, but, Tamaki—like this I am not worried about you escaping."

“What?”

In the next moment, I see Hayase-san collapsing behind him.

Wait, what?

“H-Hayase-san!?”

I try to shake off his hand and go to where my classmate fell. However, he gripped with his arm and wouldn’t let go.

“Yuji-san!? Why–let go!!”

“Be at peace. Hayase isn’t dead, I don’t intend to kill her.”

“Huh? W-what are… you trying to say?”

Yuji-san pulls me in closer with his arm and embraces me.

“Y-Yuji-san!? Now is not the time to joke!!”

“I’m not joking. I am serious. I’ve looked forward to this.”

He brought his face close to my ear and whispered sweetly.

“You——I’m going to kill.”

Though, even giving my death sentence he didn’t show any affection or his thoughts.

“W-wh—!?”

Before I finished speaking, a large impact met my neck.

My…… strength….. is fading……

And so, my consciousness flew away.

Chapter 7 - 『*Promise*』

“You did well. Leadred.” (Daichi)

I tapped the shoulders of the two female heroes from behind where Leadred put them to see if they were conscious.

Neither were killed. I only wanted to make them faint from a blow to the back of the neck.

“These guys deserved at least this much. What do we do with the other ones?” (Leadred)

“We’ll take the girl with glasses above ground. There is a soldier standing by there, tell him that the party was annihilated and to report it to the royal palace.” (Daichi)

“And the other?” (Leadred)

“Because she has her uses, I’ll make her my slave. However, no killing. I don’t have any slots remaining. Deliver Hayase to the soldier I have waiting there.” (Daichi)

“Roger. Then, I’ll carry her there.” (Leadred)

“Oh yeah, I’ll take Tamaki along to Shuri. Is it good to enter the room now?” (Daichi)

“Shuri is still cleaning up the demons there. Praise her afterwards.” (Leadred)

It was easy to imagine Shuri cutting demons into pieces with enthusiasm.

Pfft. I unintentionally laughed.

“I got it. I’ll join her.” (Daichi)

For a bit now, her behavior has been different. When I held out a fist to Leadred, she offered hers in response. They hit with a bump.

“First of all, three people. Congratulations.” (Leadred)

“Oh. Thanks.” (Daichi)

After saying my thanks, Leadred scratched her cheeks embarrassedly and turned to carry Hayase to the floor’s stair room.

“…… Now then.” (Daichi)

Fainted, this defenseless girl before me would be simple to kill given the circumstances.

But…. She was one of Shuri’s close friends, this girl.

“Hah…. For now, should I carry her along?” (Daichi)

Shouldering Tamaki’s delicate figure, I set out carrying her to the room where I executed the others.

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“Daichi-sama!” (Shuri)

As I opened the door, Shuri who was standing at the entrance of the room rushed to me.

She’s started to become attached me, like a cute animal.

“Welcome home. Were you harmed?” (Shuri)

“I’m unhurt. They were negligent.” (Daichi)

“That so? That’s good.” (Shuri)

Shuri gave a sigh of relief. As it was inevitable, I looked Shuri up and down.

“Apart from that…. I would like to ask Shuri to take care of this person’s treatment…..” (Daichi)

I brought Hero Tamaki Yuina and put her on the floor.

“Eh? ……. This person……. Isn’t she Yui-chan?” (Shuri)

Shuri was surprised at the unexpected reunion. Come to think of it, these two often talked with each other.

“She is definitely Tamaki Yuina.” (Daichi)

“So bringing her here means… her too?” (Shuri)

“Ah, I plan to kill and make her my slave.” (Daichi)

“Is that….. so.” (Shuri)

Shuri looked down when she heard what I said. It must have been hard to hear that I plan on killing her close friend.

“….. Though it is unfortunate, nothing will stop me no matter what Shuri says. For the sake of bringing Samejima down I must bring strong pieces into my control.” (Daichi)

"…… Yeah." (Shuri)

Her answer was short, tinged with a little disappointment.

"……. Were you disillusioned?" (Daichi)

"No! It's just….. That…." (Shuri)

Though she tried to say something Shuri stopped talking. Her eyes were shaking. Seeing that, I understand what she meant.

"But….. Since Yui-chan is pretty…. Um, Daichi-sama will be captured by her…." (Shuri)

"Sorry, Shu–…….. huh?" (Daichi)

I let out a strange sound from her unexpected worry.

The maiden I fell in love with says she is worried….. Even I would be shocked….

….. I guess it is necessary for me to clarify our relationship between us here, then?

"Shuri." (Daichi)

"Y-yes…." (Shuri)

"I will have no one but Shuri. I don't need anyone else. As long as Shuri likes me, these feelings of mine will never change." (Daichi)

"D-Daichi-sama….." (Shuri)

Her cheeks became pink and she clung to me.

Looking at the situation, I noticed….. This girl….. Isn't sad at all.

……. Possibly……

"……Shuri." (Daichi)

"What is it, Daichi-sama? Your love, Shuri, is here." (Shuri)

"……. Why are you doing this?" (Daichi)

With a start, the girl in my arms' body stiffened. She timidly looked up and spoke.

"……. Was I found out?" (Shuri)

She playfully stuck out her tongue. She sighed with a 'Haa'.

"Showing your master such a cute appearance to get praise even though I'm exhausted, please don't do something like this often." (Daichi)

"Sorry. I wanted to cheer Daichi-sama up….." (Shuri)

Using the edge of her clothes, she wiped her teary eyes…… sly.

"Liar." (Daichi)

"Ouch." (Shuri)

I flicked her forehead after moving her hair.

"Shuri. Please refrain from things like that in the dungeon. You can do that as much as you like once we are above ground." (Daichi)

"Then, please embrace me when we go back above ground." (Shuri)

"Tsu….. Something like that—!?" (Daichi)

Her tongue invaded my mouth. Our saliva mixed. Her eyes were close. I could hear her rough breathing.

After several seconds of her having total control over the situation, she stopped.

Pulling back her lips by a hair's breadth. Captivating. Her womanly side has definitely started to appear out of her childishness.

"…… Please embrace me okay?" (Shuri)

"……. I got it." (Daichi)

I showed that I gave up by raising my arms. I can't seem to win against Shuri in things like this. As soon as I thought this.

"I did it. I got you to promise." (Shuri)

"The way you did was unfair." (Daichi)

"It's because I endured it for a long time while Daichi-sama was away, please forgive me." (Shuri)

"……. There was no other way then." (Daichi)

I moved my hand back and forth many times through the hair of her leaning head.

Her whole-faced smile tickled my fancy—-.

"…… What am I to do with you two……" (Leadred)

——we stiffened.

We slowly turned around like rusted metal moving with a 'GiGiGi' sound.

The red demon whose gaze could kill shot us a cold look, we could do nothing but give off a strained laugh.

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…… It's cold.

…….. Where am I? My memory is hazy. At times like this, it is necessary to slowly recall what happened.

I went into the【Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep】with Umahara and everyone and Yuji-san went to the Monster House…. Yuji-san came back…. Hayase collapsed….!

The mental picture rose to the surface and became clear.

That's right… I was, by Yuji-san….he struck my neck….

…… Hayase-san it is dangerous!!

"Hayase-san!" (Tamaki)

"Kya-!?" (Shuri)

When I straightened from sleeping a small shriek rose. However, it was familiar. Rather than Hayase-san's, it was very nostalgic.

I saw who the voice came from.

There was the person I abandoned in【Rigal's Den】—Shuri-chan.

"Sh-Shuri-chan?" (Tamaki)

"Ah, you woke up, Yui-chan." (Shuri)

Without a doubt, that was my close friend Hamakaze Juri's bashful smile.

Eh, how? There, Shuri-chan…… unexpectedly, she lived? The amount of demons she would to have had killed…..

….. Was this a dream? I pinched my cheek. It hurt.

It's not…. A dream.

"? Why did you do that, Yui-chan?" (Shuri)

"No… wait a second." (Tamaki)

Naturally, my tears began overflowing. Going against what I thought, my irreplaceable close friend that I thought was dead was alive and I couldn't stop my tears.

"More than that….. Shuri-chan!" (Tamaki)

With my close friend in front of me I was overcome with emotion and spread my arms and dove at her.

Shuri-chan looked at me and stepped back. My embrace was easily refused.

"Sh-Shuri-chan! Why did you avoid me! Though this is our touching reunion!" (Tamaki)

"I'm sorry. This isn't touching for me." (Shuri)

Her words were like knifes that struck my chest.

I felt like cold water was just splashed onto my face. I pulled back from my excitement and only self-loathing remained.

…… That's right. I did something cruel to Shuri-chan. Doing these kinds of things after that, rejection is natural….

"Ah, Shuri. Tamaki woke up?" (Daichi)

"Yes, Daichi-sama. Just now." (Shuri)

"……..What?" (Tamaki)

—-My consciousness fell into a negative spiral upon hearing the voice of the man who was our guard.

"Yo, Tamaki. How was it fainting for the first time?" (Daichi)

It was the adventurer Yuji.

Chapter 8 -『Provisional Slave』

The traitor is in front of me. That evil demon is raising the edge of his mouth.

Moreover, I can't permit Shuri-chan to follow him.

"……. Where did that you who was gentle go off to, I wonder?" (Tamaki)

"The first thing you say is sarcasm….. It was a performance." (Daichi)

Yuji seemed to be elated with the events and quickly gave confirmation.

Even as I am, I plan on escaping when he lets down his guard.

Though I didn't tell that man, I have another special ability.

『Chant Omission』

With only saying the name of the magic, it can be invoked. This can only be acquired after passing a magic status of over 1500.

It is a special ability that is said that very few in this world can use it. Yuji is sure to not think that I can use it.

My lack of restraints are proof of his negligence.

"Heh….. That was a skillful deceit. Particularly since Hayase-san seems to have liked you?" (Tamaki)

“That was surprising. It was hard to do that to Hayase. Since I only love Shuri.” (Daichi)

“A-……” (Tamaki)

Yuji hugged Shuri-chan from behind. A chill sent shivers down my spine.

My important close friend was being played with by such a man. That reason alone was plenty for me to attack.

“No more! Shuri-chan, duck!” (Tamaki)

I launch magic at him at point-blank range.

“Freezing Lance!” (Tamaki)

I aimed at his face with the lance held in my hands in order to pierce it. However, it was stopped just before by an unexpected hand.

“…… Yui-chan, what are you doing?” (Shuri)

The girl who caught the tip of the spear wore an expression of anger. Her gaze was filled with hostility towards me.

Though she was filling the room with a sensation that would make me want to run, I didn’t turn away.

I absolutely have to bring her back.

“Did you just try to kill my important Daichi-sama?” (Shuri)

“T-that’s not it! I was trying to save Shuri-chan!” (Tamaki)

“After you abandoned me at that time, you say something like that?” (Shuri)

“——!” (Tamaki)

Those cutting words pierced my chest.

However, nothing that she said was wrong. I understand. I know that I did such a thing.

That’s why I was impatient. I must be able to talk some sense into Shuri-chan by any means.

I began to denounce the man next to her.

“I’m sorry! I’ll apologize as much as you want! I want you to hear me out first!” (Tamaki)

“What is it?” (Shuri)

“Yuji is dangerous! It’s fine if it is only for now but, please believe me, come here!” (Tamaki)

“Daichi-sama is dangerous?” (Shuri)

“Yes! This guy attacked me and Hayase-san….. Perhaps, Umahara and Minamoto-san were as well.” (Tamaki)

“If you are talking about those two, I killed them you know?” (Daichi)

“Attack——eh, kill……? Eh?” (Tamaki)

I can’t believe what I just heard.

Two heroes were killed?

By an ordinary adventurer?

Or else….. Shuri-chan?

“W-what do you mean….?” (Tamaki)

“It’s like this. Catch.” (Daichi)

The response wasn’t from Shuri-chan, but Yuji. Suddenly, something round was tossed towards me and I managed to catch it.

There was a disgusting feeling on my hand.

It wasn’t a ball.

The eyes were obviously crying. The teeth were missing. A crooked nose. Part of the blonde hair was reddish brown.

I was holding my classmate’s severed head.

“Uaaaaaaaaaaaah!?” (Tamaki)

In order to never see it again, I threw it away and felt nauseous.

“Ooeh! Haa…..haaa….” (Tamaki)

“Oi oi. Is that how you treat your classmate’s head? Treat it delicately.” (Daichi)

He looked at me without innocence. He is enjoying seeing me ridiculed.

Such a…… he’s crazy…..!

“You…. Fiend…..!” (Tamaki)

“You’ve said enough, as you are blind to your own shortcomings. Right, Shuri?” (Daichi)

“Hai, Daichi-sama. It is as you said.” (Shuri)

“Shuri-chan…..” (Tamaki)

She must have been brainwashed strongly. Her true feelings must be of suffering.

It is vexing that I don’t have the power to do anything.

The power to do what?

Who’s the hero?

I can’t even save one friend that is in front of me.

“….. What do you want to do?” (Tamaki)

“Ah?” (Daichi)

“My close friend manipulated, myself captured….. Do you bare a grudge against the kingdom!?” (Tamaki)

“…….. Well, that and the reality aren’t too different.” (Daichi)

Yuji gripped the neck of me who was sitting down and rose me up. I was lifted easily and my feet were off the ground.

“Ka-…….ha……” (Tamaki)

My throat was constricted and it became hard to breathe.

……Can’t……Breathe…….

“I…… I will take my revenge on you all. Especially Samejima.” (Daichi)

“Why…… Same…..jima….?” (Tamaki)

“You still haven’t understood? Shuri even called my true name some time ago.” (Daichi)

Shuri-chan did……?

I think as my consciousness is fading.

She definitely called Yuji Daichi-sama.

Daichi…..?

Did I know someone with a name like that……. Ah.

I did. There was one person.

Just as we did to Shuri-chan, we deserted that boy on that day.

His name was Katsuragi Daichi. The child that the class bullied.

N-no way…….

He couldn’t be alive. I had saw. At that time, his body had been eaten by a demon.

This is….. A lie…..

“…… Looks like you realized.” (Daichi)

“Ah-“ (Tamaki)

I was unexpectedly let go and I fell. I landed on my butt.

Ouch, it was painful.

“Yuji is just a false name. My real name is Katsuragi Daichi. I have returned all the way from hell to take my revenge.” (Daichi)

He laughed with a smile as he put the sword that was on his waist up to my neck.

It was eerie, and my mind was completely blurred out with fear. My teeth were noisy and wouldn't stop chattering with a 'GachiGachi'. Tears started to overflow, too.

It was because the blood thirst emanating from him was the real thing. Otherwise I would never have been frightened by someone like Katsuragi.

I was sure that they wouldn't give me another chance. The only thing I could think of was that I would be killed.

…… Ah, so this is where I will die…..

Knowing that『Death』was coming, all of my memories began to surface…. I'm scared.

Dying….. Is scaryyyyyyy……

"……. Well, Tamaki. I will give you a choice." (Daichi)

"W-what…..?" (Tamaki)

"Will you die here and lose your life for the rest of time? Or, will you devote your life as my slave?" (Daichi)

Katsuragi offered a sweet temptation.

"You can be together Shuri after becoming my slave, and I also promise to not harm you further." (Daichi)

"R-really?" (Tamaki)

“However, the moment you show any odd behavior to the demon or I… well, Shuri will mercilessly kill you if that happens. What do you think, Tamaki?” (Daichi)

“I-I will become your slave! Please! I’ll devote my life to you! S-so please, don’t kill me!” (Tamaki)

My words naturally clung to the option that gave me hope.

I want to live. I won’t die. That is reason enough.

Thinking about it isn’t necessary. I would have been troubled if I hesitated and he changed his mind.

“Is that so? A wise choice, Tamaki. You have my praise.” (Daichi)

“T-thank you.” (Tamaki)

Seeming satisfied by my immediate response, he withdrew the sword and sheathed it.

Released from their blood thirst, I felt very alive.

“Tamaki Yuina. You are now my provisional slave.” (Daichi)

This day, I went from being a hero to Katsuragi Daichi’s slave.

Chapter 9 - 『Changing of Floors』

Because we added Tamaki as a party member after finishing our revenge, our focus switched to capturing the dungeon.

Why did we come to this dungeon to begin with?

To acquire and train new people. Listening to what Leadred had to say, I understood well than I am a hero.

However, the information was inconsistent.

I'm told that she was defeated by the hero Terias and sealed in that dungeon. And then, after a long time had passed, a woman unfastened the seal placed on her.

However, she was told that『Someday, our hero will appear without fail. That person will be an inhabitant from hell and will bring glory.』so she had been waiting there for a long time.

When I asked her whether I was good enough to be the hero to『Revenge the Resented』she reported that I was suited it fine.

Thinking back on the conversation, there might be others like Leadred scattered in various dungeons that I could use as my followers.

Leadred had served as the leader of a special attack unit and didn't seem to know what ends her comrades met with as she was the first sealed.

Then, the conclusion was to capture the nearby dungeon.

I want a full set of these big guns. It wouldn't do if they were killed.

This is coming from the four people in the front line, including the unparalleled me…. Huh? Is it just me or is everyone in the front line?

"This corpse seems to be a living corpse, stay dead!" (Shuri)

Jumping at the heart area of the Wight from the left side, Shuri plunges forward even more.

"You think a pile of bones like you could hurt me!? Aah!?" (Tamaki)

Dancing through the air, her war sword slices through a massive amount of the bone corpses as though they were nonexistent.

"Freezing Lance!" (Tamaki)

Tamaki invoked an ice lance and aimed it at a group of Wight Lancers, piercing and knocking them down.

"It is futile no matter how many of you guys show up." (Daichi)

Leading the attack, I challenged the Wight Lancers while amongst them, slashing them with my sword.

I invoked my Special Ability『Magician of Slaughter』. All Wight Lancers within a radius of ten meters of my target were annihilated. The amount remaining was approximately one hundred.

If that's the case, I can finish the rest myself then.

"You guys! All members fall behind me!" (Daichi)

Obeying orders, Shuri, Leadred, and Tamaki withdrew. After confirming, I put power into my hand.

“Berserk Tempest!” (Daichi)

Using chant omission, I cast an Emperor-class magic that returned the Wights to ordinary corpses.

“Kikikikikiki…..” (100 Dying Wights)

The sound of bones clattering together was noisy. However, the loud noise was overshadowed. We saw the staircase.

With this, Floor 30 was cleared.

“Wa! Y-yay! We broke through the monster house!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki excitedly came up to us.

“This much is natural right?” (Shuri)

“I don’t mean to rejoice every time.” (Leadred)

“Let’s immediately go to the next floor. Time is precious.” (Daichi)

Without incident, we descend the staircase.

“……..Eeeh……..” (Tamaki)

I decided to ignore Tamaki’s depressed voice.

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That monster house from the last floor is no longer any threat for us.

Rather, it is welcomed.

Because the monster house is quite efficient for acquiring experience.

“Tamaki, show me your status.” (Daichi)

“Y-yes.” (Tamaki)

“……..Yui-chan? You should use the honorific as you are already a slave of Daichi-sama.” (Shuri)

“I-I understand, Shuri-chan…. So, please stop making that face? It’s scary?” (Tamaki)

“If it is for Daichi-sama I will become a prajna.” (Shuri)
[TN: Prajna— direct insight into the truth taught by the Buddha, as a faculty required to attain enlightenment.]

“…… Shuri has become as lovely as I could wish for.” (Daichi)

“T-that sort of….. If it is fine with Daichi-sama…. Then I…. Would be your wife…..” (Shuri)

“……. How many times a day do they do this…..” (Tamaki)

“That’s right. To the extent that I wasn’t able to meet today, it’s rather much more than usual. I think I see it at least once in the morning and night.” (Leadred)

“Somehow, that hurts to hear.” (Tamaki)

“Give it up. I got used to it.” (Leadred)

Interrupting the conversation, I opened mine and Tamaki’s status.

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Katsuragi Daichi Occupation: Hero Level 68

Stamina: 4250

Magic: 5600→4100

Physical: 4900

Endurance: 4500

Agility: 2900

Special Abilities:

『Steel Heart』: During battle, Endurance doubles. Poison, Paralysis, Sleep, and Berserk have a 1/3 chance of failing.

『Persistent Soul』: Magic cannot be depleted below 100.

『Wight King』: Able to make contracts with living beings near death, to revive them and make them obey to your will. Every time the user dies twice, increases the limit of the number of contracts. Currently, there are no open slots.

『Absolute Command』: Appears when those bound by a contract are lower leveled than the Wight King. Any order will be accepted by the slave until cancelled.

『Magician of Slaughter』: Killed targets within a radius of ten meters will deal the same damage to all units of the same type.

『Cruel Mind』: When you kill three members of the same species, your physical attacks against that species gain a paralytic poison effect.

『Chant Omission』: When magic is invoked, the chant may be removed. However, Consumption Magic is one. However, the mana consumption increases by fifty percent.

Unique Ability:

『Revenge of the Resented』: No matter how many times you die, power stored in the abyss of death is taken for revival.

Current Number of Deaths → 7

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Hamakaze Shuri Occupation: High-Grade Slave Level 72

Stamina: 2800

Magic: 2940

Physical: 2300

Endurance: 1670

Agility: 1230

Special Abilities:

『Auto Heal』: Heals three hundred stamina every ten minutes.

『Loyal Heart』: When the master's life is in danger, all statuses increase by 80%.

『Chant Omission』: When magic is invoked, the chant may be removed. However, Consumption Magic is one. However, the mana consumption increases by 50%.

『Demon Killing』: Limit Release ability. All of the owner's status values double. However, there is a five minute time limit. After use, the Stamina value will become zero and the user will faint.

Special Status: 『High-Grade Slave』 Owner → Katsuragi Daichi.

All attacks against him are sealed. Compulsory submission until release.

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Akina Leadred Occupation: High-Grade Slave Level 79

Stamina: 6900

Magic: 5240

Physical: 7120

Endurance: 4200

Agility: 5380

Special Abilities:

『Demonic Pressure』: Magic is reduced by one hundred times the difference between the levels of the caster and the target. Until caster is defeated, cannot be healed.

『Ogre Flame』: Uses 100 magic. Fires a King-class fireball with Chanting Omission.

『Chant Omission』: When magic is invoked, the chant may be removed. However, Consumption Magic is one. However, the mana consumption increases by 50%.

Special Status: 『High-Grade Slave』 Owner → Katsuragi Daichi.

All attacks against him are sealed. Compulsory submission until release.

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Rin Wade Occupation: High-Grade Slave Level 37

Stamina: 240

Magic: 210

Physical: 300

Endurance: 95

Agility: 110

Special Status:『High-Grade Slave』Owner → Katsuragi Daichi.

All attacks against him are sealed. Compulsory submission until release.

『Exercising a Command』: Hayase Fuuko's guard of the royal palace. Return, Watch, Report, Assist. Do not allow Hayase Fuuko to be harmed and treat her as you would Katsuragi Daichi.

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Tamaki Yuina Occupation: Hero Level 28

Stamina: 720

Magic: 1780

Physical: 1100

Endurance: 840

Agility: 350

Special Abilities:

『Witch of Freezing』: The effect of the ice magic is increased by one class. However, God-class magic is not increased.

『Chant Omission』: When magic is invoked, the chant may be removed. However, Consumption Magic is one. However, the mana consumption increases by 50%.

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“Uwah, so weak!” (Leadred)

Leadred-san, thank you for your frank impression. Certainly, it isn’t just numerical values in combat, but those numbers show no signs of being useful in combat.

“…… Well then, at best you can be used as a shield…..” (Daichi)

“That treatment is cruel, master!?” (Tamaki)

“Well, you are a slave…. Isn’t it your role to protect the head?” (Daichi)

“Uuu…….. T-that is so.” (Tamaki)

“Thus, Tamaki. You will desperately defend Shuri. If she dies, so do you.” (Daichi)

“She’s not the head!? But I got it!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki had become motivated when I mentioned she was to protect Shuri.

……. Well, I’ll kill her eventually.

“…. Hey, Hero-sama. What will you do next? Raise her level?” (Leadred)

“I have no obligation to do that, she will probably die before we reach the lower floors.” (Daichi)

“Understood. Well, let’s be off then.” (Leadred)

We set out with our vanguard as Leadred, who has our biggest battle potential.

For the time being, we stop at floor 40 to rest. I plan in my head.

Peculiarly, our enemy’s war potentials haven’t increased for a long time. Can we force our status values go up somewhat if we keep fighting them?

“Umu…… as it is, we’ve spent quite a lot of time on floor 40.” (Daichi)

“I wonder. Maybe, it’ll take time to find the stair room, but I don’t think the battle itself will be difficult” (Leadred)

“Since Leadred says that is the case, I am relieved.” (Daichi)

“…….. The dungeon capture up to here has been easy……. As expected of master!” (Tamaki)

“It is natural when you are with Daichi-sama. Those damned heroes don’t have the eyes to see Daichi-sama’s true character.” (Shuri)

….. Ah, Shuri-san. You originally sided with those damned heroes……

I mean, this is Tamaki’s only the second time she has explored a dungeon….. Should I be amused?

“…….. Anyways, do not relax your guard. Use this time to focus.” (Daichi)

I turned to catch the attention of the two people who were behind me making noise.

Afterwards, we reached floor 40’s stairs room without difficulty as predicted by Leadred.

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Though we arrived at the stairs room using Leadred’s intuition, floor 40 was an exception. Her presence detention was obstructed by magic that was leaked out from the crystals that cover the walls.

It seems to fill this region of the floor, giving each room an identical feeling as the last.

Because of this, we smashed through all of the rooms on the floor. We are in the last room.

“Well then, are you ready?” (Daichi)

I ask the members while I place my hand on the door. Shuri and Leadred nod, Tamaki nods after seeing their responses.

With the exception of Leadred, we invoke magic to immediately.

By the way, I don't use 『Berserk Tempest』. I don't have enough magic to use Emperor-class magic many times. It will be my trump card.

Though my magic can't drop below 100, my mental strength falls considerably. If possible, I don't want to lose my calm judgment.

"Alright….. Let's go." (Daichi)

Taking advantage of my strength, I open the massive door in one go and rush in.

However, the opponent is nowhere to be seen. —Ah, no.

From experience, rooms with stairs had to have demons. Since it was not in front, behind, to the left or to the right there was only one direction it could be.

"Above!" (Daichi)

Everyone looked up at the ceiling in response to my voice.

Within our gaze, using a hundred feet to cling against a wall, was a giant centipede that was wearing jet-black armor that was shooting us a penetrating glare.

Chapter 10 - 『Attack of Desperation』

“Sonic Wave!” (Daichi)

“Wind Slice!” (Shuri)

“Ice Blizzard!” (Tamaki)

The three of us rapid-fire Spirit and Soul-class magic.

Though we were trying to seal the centipede’s movements, its strong armor repelled the wind blades and Tamaki’s blizzard only froze a few of the legs.

“Pay attention! That centipede’s armor is considerably tough!” (Leadred)

Following our magic assault, Leadred shouted out.

“Uraah!!” (Leadred)

She burst out with a rotating blade. The sound of metal clashing with metal echoed.

The instant she added the rotation, Leadred overcame its resistance and cut through its long body—at least I think she did, though there seems to be no cut on it. The centipede doesn’t seem to be in pain either.

“Shaaaaaa!!” (Centipede)

The centipede wriggled its body and descended from the walls to the ground. It rushed at us when we slowed our assault.

“Heeee!?” (Tamaki)

“Disgusting!” (Shuri)

We each jump out of the way to the left and right. Leadred also managed to escape from the centipede’s back.

However, Leadred’s slashes didn’t cease. Our magic also didn’t seem to be doing much damage.

“This centipede is rather troublesome.” (Daichi)

“I confirmed that its whole body is covered with that armor when jumping onto it before.” (Leadred)

“Nevertheless, even if its skin and armor are stacked it won’t stop us from killing it one way or another.” (Shuri)

Standing next to Leadred, Shuri expressed a warlike smile while encouraging us.

Only the legs and face lack the armor. The risk is definitely increased when you aim at its face. By process of elimination, we have no choice but to stop its movement and aim at its legs.

“From here on Shuri and I will hold its attention!! Meanwhile, Tamaki freeze its legs and Leadred cut through them!!”

““Your will!”” (Tamaki, Shuri, Leadred)

Shuri and I immediately struck the centipede’s face with a Spirit-class Fireball. It bent towards us and had its completely faced us.

It was entirely fixated on us.

Now!

““Sacred spirits, illuminate us with your light! Shining!”” (Daichi, Shuri)

Using our flash at the same time, we stole the centipede’s sight. My party members aren’t idiots who would miss this timing.

“Spirits of Ice, freeze my enemy! Ice Blizzard!” (Tamaki)

Determining that this fight would drag out, Tamaki chanted the Ice Blizzard to decrease its mana consumption.

The legs on the centipede were frozen on one side, causing it to slip and lose its balance.

“Line Drive!” (Leadred)

Leadred raised her sword over her head and a red line streamed out, acting as an extension of the blade as she slashed off the centipede’s legs.

What, that’s–! So cool! Amazing, Leadred!

Our excitement didn’t stop and we swiftly launched magic at its face.

“Storm of Slaughter!” (Daichi)

“Wind Slice!” (Shuri)

“Freezing Lance!” (Tamaki)

“Demon Flame!” (Leadred)

All four of the shots hit. The centipede’s face became messy and burned black.

It started convulsing with a *PikuPiku*, and eventually stopped.

"…… Haaa… We did it…" (Tamaki)

Seeing it stop moving, Tamaki weakly sat down. The tension ceased.

Well, we would have had a hard time if we didn't have Leadred. It can't be helped that she would say that since she isn't accustomed to fights of this level.

Shuri also had an expression of exhaustion.

Umu. We should rest here for a bit. I used up a considerable amount of my magic power. Verifying this by saying 'Open', I went from 5000 to 870. Shuri was also at 300.

By nature of the dungeon, there are no demons after you defeat the floor's lord at the stairs room.

Therefore, we can rest at ease.

"Everyone! We'll rest here. We'll separate into two groups—-" (Daichi)

——While trying to explain, I was drowned out by a loud noise. What was that?

There was the sound of an explosion behind us.

"Wha–!?" (Daichi)

Turning around in a rush, the centipede that was there a moment ago vanished.

Suicide? No, could it have been for some other reason…..?

I tried to calm myself by trying to find the reason.

Concerning the result, the latter was the right answer.

"……. Oi oi, you're kidding right….." (Daichi)

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. The crystals in the room began shining and the light gathered where the corpse of the centipede used to be.

The light gradually came together to create a familiar shape.

Before long the light finished aggregating as the last light joined the set and burst to reveal a jet-black body. Armor covered its entire body now.

A sharp horn grew from the headpiece of its armor.

Again, the challenger Revenger appears before us and roars.

"Kishaaaaaa!!" (Centipede)

It sounded the gong of the game's restart.

"Tamaki! Protect Shuri with everything you have!" (Daichi)

I ordered them to group together, who were sure to have been the most fatigued of us, and leapt to the sky.

Leadred also leapt similarly.

The attacks we used against its legs from before would do no good. It is essential that we attack the exposed skin on its face near the horn. In that case, the best choice we have is to bet on a blow from behind.

"Uooooh!" (Daichi)

“Aaaaah!” (Leadred)

Leadred and I begin attacking it with our swords. However, we were unable to wound it this time.

“Wha–!?” (Leadred)

Leadred was unable to hide her surprise.

“It is getting increasingly stronger!” (Leadred)

“Tch! So troublesome!” (Daichi)

Kicking off of the armor, I separated from the centipede. However, the centipede chose that instant to attack.

“Wind!”

I threw wind magic at my feet, forcibly avoiding him.

The centipede collides with the wall. A loud crushing sound is heard. The wall was dented by the strong horn.

Thinking about being pierced by that horn causes me to shudder. And now, I understand that to win I can’t be hit by that attack.

“Leadred! Are you unable to break its armor!?” (Daichi)

“I can! …… I want to say, but that reinforced armor completely withstands my attacks…. At best, I might be able to put a crack in it.” (Leadred)

It’s impossible for Leadred, our strongest demon……?

……. There must be some other way. Resolve yourself.

“Shuri!” (Daichi)

“Hai!” (Shuri)

Calling her name, Shuri immediately came to me. She seems to already understand my idea. She waited with open arms.

I buried my face in her warm embrace.

“…… Just a bit ago, you said that doing this was no good…..” (Shuri)

“Sorry. Just for a bit.” (Daichi)

“…… It can’t be helped because you are my master, Daichi-sama.” (Shuri)

Shuri gently patted my back. Courage surged through me.

“Shuri.” (Daichi)

“What is it?” (Shuri)

“……. I’m, going to die for a little while. It doesn’t look like I can win.” (Daichi)

“……. I’m sorry, Daichi-sama. It’s because I am always so useless……” (Shuri)

“Shuri doesn’t have to worry. You give me courage. You heal me. That alone is enough.” (Daichi)

“Daichi-sama…..” (Shuri)

I want to defend her. I don’t want her to die.

I think I might be able to become a real hero.

“Thank you, Shuri……. Though I sorely wanted us to be together longer, it seems like that thing over there won’t wait any longer.” (Daichi)

Looking up, the centipede was posed to charge.

This was certainly the norm for us.

“It is regrettable.” (Shuri)

“I think so too. Therefore, when I revive….. Please allow me to rest my head on your lap.” (Daichi)

“Yes.” (Shuri)

Shuri acknowledged me with her smiling face.

With that I am now the strongest. Nothing can scare me.

“Shuri, escape to over there. Leadred, I ask you to care for her while I am dead.” (Daichi)

“Leave it to me, Hero-sama.” (Leadred)

She stepped back and took position so as to protect Shuri.

Seeing that, I put all of my focus on the pest in front of me.

It was simple to say so. However, it is difficult to do.

After directly receiving that guy’s attack, I plan shove my arm inside of his mouth and drive magic into it.

I take a stance and lower my waist to endure the coming impact. I would die in vain if I don’t stop its momentum here.

“Earth Chain!” (Daichi)

Both of my feet become solidly fixed to the ground with the earth chain.

“Kikikikikikii!!” (Centipede)

I watch the centipede draw closer at a high speed. The lethal horn that will kill me approaches.

It pointed at my stomach and pierced through me.

Severe pain ran through my entire body.

“————-!!” (Daichi)

I desperately endured wanting to cry out. Blood began to overflow from my mouth. My field of vision became dark. My legs shivered and lost strength.

However, I ignored all of it.

All of my concentration was on killing this thing…..!

“AaaaaaaAAAAAH!!” (Daichi)

I strained to muster up strength.

The result of my perfect countermeasure stopped its momentum completely. The centipede tried to escape, but I seized its headpiece.

Its weak point was exposed.

I invaded its mouth with my arm.

“Berserk…….” (Daichi)

The centipede let out some kind of shriek. Blood streamed from my arm. It worked out somehow.

This guy is dead. That much is true.

I speak the word that will finish the chant.

“Tempeeeeeeeeest!!” (Daichi)

The insect’s body becomes a lump of flesh, scattering.

Chapter 11 - 『Making a Second Demonic Slave』

“Welcome back from the nether world, Daichi-sama.” (Shuri)

“…… I’m back, Shuri.” (Daichi)

According to my request, Shuri welcomed me back from my eighth death with a lap pillow.

……. That dream, I didn’t see it this time….. Though I thought about complaining to her this time, I’m strangely sad. I’m also happy that I won’t die in the dream anymore.

It’s a strange feeling.

“Eh? Huh? How are you alive?” (Tamaki)

Such a voice was heard to the side.

The wording Tamaki chose for my name was coarse.

Perhaps, I guess you were pleased that I died.

“Tamaki.” (Daichi)

“Y-yes! What is it!?” (Tamaki)

Calling her name, Tamaki started using honorific language in a panic. It was easy to imagine that she was dripping with cold sweat.

Such an absurd Tamaki, I laughed.

“W-what are you laughing about, Master!?” (Tamaki)

“No, it’s nothing. Even there is no way you can deceive me, you try so hard……..” (Daichi)

“There’s no other way right? Because, master is scary….” (Tamaki)

“So, why would you….. You’ve said enough. Ah-, that’s dangerous. My stomach is in pain because I’ve laughed too much.

“Ah! Master is an idiot!” (Tamaki)

We brought down the powerful enemy and were wrapped in a sociable atmosphere.

Oh, I’m seriously laughing now.

……. Well, I’ve already died eight times……

The number of slave slots are sure to increase.

Looking at the attitude displayed a little while ago, there seems to be no reflection coming from this fellow.

……..

“Tamaki” (Daichi)

“What is it?” (Tamaki)

“For the time being……. Die?” (Daichi)

“……. Eh?” (Tamaki)

I pointed my index finger at her, and Leadred suddenly stabbed through Tamaki's left breast from behind.

"…….. E-, h-…..uh?" (Tamaki)

"Ogre Flame" (Leadred)

To make sure Tamaki was completely dead, Leadred scorched her face with the flames.

"Leadred. Do not kill her immediately. I had you miss her vitals on purpose." (Daichi)

"Ah, I understand." (Leadred)

She realized that Tamaki's hand was twitching little by little.

It's hot, it's painful, it's agonizing.

These feelings are sure to rule her mind. To a certain extent, as time passes the pain will lessen, though in exchange the terror of death thickens.

When death is concerned, I am already a veteran.

I mostly understand what humans think about as they die.

"However, Leadred….. Why didn't you finish her off earlier? Didn't I say to 'take care of that person'?"

I was referring to Tamaki, not the centipede when I said 'person'. There was no need to enslave a giant centipede….. To begin with, I was aiming to exterminate the centipede. I couldn't afford to enslave a demon that would disappear and disperse when defeated.

I was concerned that Tamaki would escape after my death.

With that I understood that she hadn't been made into a complete slave yet. I expected that she did not sincerely feel loyalty to me.

Would she have been fine escaping by herself, or would she have brought Shuri with her? She could have picked either.

When I talked to Leadred about my past, she also told me of hers.

She used to be a demon called the『Horrific Killer』. Therefore, she would have no hesitation in killing humans.

However, I still asked why she would treat her like that….

"Weeeell, hey. Isn't this woman a terrible hero?" (Leadred)

"That's true." (Daichi)

"Then, I thought that you would savor seeing her suffer and would cheer you up." (Leadred)

"……. Leadred……." (Daichi)

I was touched. Tears fell from her gentle consideration for me.

Seeing my behavior as so different from my normal, she averted her gaze. Red that was not the color of her skin began to appear on her cheeks.

"Thank you so much." (Daichi)

"Y-yeah. Though, please cease patting my head……. It is embarrassing." (Leadred)

"Hmm? What? I couldn't hear you that well…." (Daichi)

In order to once again see Leadred's rare 'dere' side, I activated my deafness skills.

"B-be quiet! Aside from that, deal with this person!" (Leadred)

She pulls her sword out of Tamaki and points it at me.

"She's not longer breathing! ……. You should enslaver her quickly. Its better when the corpse is fresh." (Leadred)

"You're right. Since Leadred is embarrassed I'll stop poking fun at her and commence making Tamaki into a slave." (Daichi)

"Are you even listening!?" (Leadred)

Ignoring Leadred's thrust, I laid Tamaki's corpse out on the floor.

"You. Now, I bestow upon you a new life. I give you a second life. Here, you pledge a contract with me and will fulfill your duty as my servant. Wight Back!"

Tamaki's body began mending itself. The wound on her chest closed and the parts of her face that were burnt each begin repairing themselves.

With this, Tamaki's transformation into a slave is complete. She will awaken soon. The reaction that I will never be tired of seeing is sure to happen.

Tamaki can no longer run away.

"…….. Daichi-sama." (Shuri)

While I was looking after Tamaki, Shuri who became bored tapped her lap with a 'PonPon'.

I don't think a man who would deny this invitation exists.

“Leadred. This is a good time to take a rest. Stand watch over Tamaki while I go dream again.” (Daichi)

“And if she runs?” (Leadred)

“Killing her with Demonic Pressure or something would be wasteful, so take away her means of attacking. I recommend breaking a bone or two.” (Daichi)

“I understand. I’ll heal her as much as I feel like.” (Leadred)

Leadred waved her hand. Her glance was already fixed on Tamaki.

…… I don’t think that she wants to see us flirting.

“In that case, Shuri. Once again I am indebted to you.” (Daichi)

“I don’t mind. Please rest however long you wish. I enjoy Daichi-sama’s sleeping face.” (Shuri)

Since Shuri said so sincerely, I couldn’t laugh.

However, I feel like I’m taking advantage of her gentle nature.

I can’t understand why she is so devoted….. Really.

I completely relax, thoroughly enjoying the soft and comfortable elasticity, and fall into a deep sleep.

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After each of us taking turns resting for several hours to regain our magic power, we resume the dungeon capturing as before.

The three of us were talking about the centipede, with Leadred and Shuri in the rear.

Tamaki was made to keep the demons some company by herself. Incidentally, since I used 『Absolute Command』 on her to disallow her from talking, she cannot speak.

After she revived as a slave, Tamaki said various things and was noisy. Abusive language was poured on me. She was very persistent.

As I was rather fed up with her, I punished her by making her slay demons solo. To keep her level from increasing, Shuri and Leadred kill the demons with magic.

I'll knock Tamaki down indirectly by keeping her from gaining experience.

"That centipede from before. Don't you think it caused our levels to raise suddenly?" (Daichi)

Talking about the fight in stairs room was uncomfortable. Even though it was the 40th Floor, it had a strength to boast about.

That crystal revived and fortified it.

Obviously strange.

"That's right. Though compared to you two I couldn't help because I am powerless….." (Shuri)

"I was also surprised. With this, there are three times that my sword couldn't cut through something. Though, with this I have an idea about the dungeon's guardian." (Leadred)

The proud Leadred was smiling.

“Is that true!?” (Daichi)

“Ah. That detestable double layered armor. The demon’s revival from magic. At any rate, with armor hard enough that I can’t cut through there is only one other person it could be. However….” (Leadred)

“Who is it?” (Daichi)

“That person has a considerably tiresome personality. Probably, we won’t be able to avoid a fight.” (Leadred)

“Eh, seriously?” (Daichi)

I had thought that if we came across someone like Leadred, we could persuade them. It would be best to end everything just by talking.

However, I’m afraid that it seems we won’t be able to use that method.

“Seriously. That guy won’t listen to what you say because he won’t judge you as worth serving.” (Leadred)

“Is that so…..” (Daichi)

“Though, wouldn’t Daichi-sama’s power to enslave work?” (Shuri)

“Even so, avoiding a fight is indispensable, above all there aren’t any slots open.” (Daichi)

Though I could release Tamaki in exchange for the overwhelming uses of the demon, it is convenient to have Tamaki as a pawn under my control.

I died twice during the fight with Leadred, so I’ll certainly end up dying some more. It’s a hunch I have.

“Furthermore, it’s strength is comparable to mine.” (Leadred)

“How…… What’s the name of this demon?” (Shuri)

Assuming he is important, Shuri asked Leadred.

“Fantra Angas. In those days, he was a tactician and a master of the strongest Ice magic.” (Leadred)

Chapter 12 - 『I Don't Understand』

After taking out the enemy on the 40th Floor, floors 41-49 were uneventful.

When I died my status values increased by 1000 each, with Leadred and Shuri's rising by 500 in the same way. Tamaki's magic rose to over 2500, though her other stat increases were poor. It was different from Shuri's who expanded everything as an average, so maybe she is a specialist type.

No one obtained a new special ability. However, we've become the highest leveled adventurers in the region.

Thinking the sailing was smooth, we stumbled into the stairs room on the 60thFloor. Now for the critically acclaimed battle.

"Damn him! He's annoying!" (Leadred)

Next to me, Leadred cursed him.

I understand what she means. I've also become exhausted.

"He won't stop moving……! Magic isn't effective either, you're fucking kidding me!" (Leadred)

Leadred thrusted at the hostile tiny demon. However, he avoided it by stepping to the right and retaliated with a head-butt to her side.

However, it didn't damage Leadred because its body was soft like jelly. Even so, it wasn't limited to physical damage.

"Tch! Poison!" (Leadred)

Leadred jumped far back to where Shuri was on standby so she could treat her with Light restoration magic.

In other words, the only current combatants were Tamaki and I.

“Hey, what is this guy…” (Daichi)

I looked at the tiny demon’s body jiggling in front of me—Leadred also didn’t know its name so I named it—it was a Poison Slime.

Opening the door, when we saw this fellow by himself we were sure we’d win.

It wasn’t an exaggeration to say we were looking at an instant kill. Though after examining it, we were amazed.

Its Wit stat and reaction speed were crazy. We couldn’t hit its body with magic. Even touching it were afflict us with a special condition from its 『Deadly Poison』.

This guy is definitely not an ordinary slime. I’ve never known a slime to be this powerful.

Though Shuri can fortunately use recovery magic, the truth is that we can’t be careless with the 『Poison』 when we attack.

Listening to Leadred’s story a little while ago, this slime might be one of Fantra’s strategis.

His aim might be to consume our Stamina and Magic statuses.

It has been an hour.

I mean this fits that guy’s strategy brilliantly.

“One moment Katsuragi! Do you not have a plan!?” (Tamaki)

The complaint was from the drooping Tamaki. So noisy. I’m thinking to myself here.

And that guy is…… look, after such a loud voice he’s locked-on to you.

“Ah, wait time out!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki was tackled by the slime fruitlessly.

Naturally, she was afflicted with the 『Deadly Poison』.

However, I was struck with an idea. A way to overcome this.

For that reason, Tamaki was indispensable. I rushed to her while she was collapsing and drove the slime off of her shoulder.

“Uuu…… Katsuragi…..” (Tamaki)

“Are you alright, Tamaki?” (Daichi)

“The attack wasn’t that strong. However, the poison…..” (Tamaki)

“One moment, now, let me check. Open.” (Daichi)

==========

Tamaki Yuina Occupation: High-Grade Slave Level: 40

Stamina: 920→908

Magic: 2540

Physical: 1300

Endurance: 1040

Agility: 620

Special Abilities:

『Witch of Freezing』: The effect of the ice magic is increased by one class. However, God-class magic is not increased.

『Chant Omission』: When magic is invoked, the chant may be removed. However, Consumption Magic is one. However, the mana consumption increases by 50%.

Special Status: 『High-Grade Slave』 Owner → Katsuragi Daichi. All attacks against him are sealed. Compulsory submission until release.

『Deadly Poison』: Decreases stamina value by 100 per minute. If the value reaches 0 from this effect, the object dies.

==========

Tamaki only has nine minutes left. It is essential that I do this quickly.

Raising her upper body, I grip her neck and raise her up.

“Hey! You, what are you doing to a sick person!?” (Tamaki)

“I’m going to stop that guy’s movement stopped using you! I expect you to start your suicide tackle. Catch him at that moment! Sound good!?” (Daichi)

“That decision is not good! I’d be no different than a shield!” (Tamaki)

“Give it up! Repent for your actions so far!” (Daichi)

“No! Let go of me!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki struggled desperately to escape my grip. Ah, another troublesome woman!

When I ordered her with an Absolute Command to become a shield, her resistance finally ended.

Now she was concentrating all of her energy on capturing the slime. The change had such a large gap that it was surreal.

“Do you wish to be my shield!?” (Daichi)

“I want to be my master’s shield!” (Tamaki)

“Alright! Then, go! Shield!” (Daichi)

“Yes!” (Tamaki)

Although Tamaki《The Shield》was crying, she answered with a smile and dexterously approached the slime.

As expected, this guy only knows how to counter with a head-butt.

“Shield! Capture it!” (Daichi)

As it hit her stomach, the shield succeeded in capturing the slime with a well-timed embrace.

Raising it above her head, it was made unable to move by using Ice magic on it at point blank range.

“I did it! I did it, master!” (Tamaki)

“That’s right. Then, your reward. Pass it to me and receive your treatment from Shuri.” (Daichi)

“Thank you very much. I won’t forget your kindness. I will surely return it.” (Tamaki)

“Oh. I understand, so go quickly.” (Daichi)

With a rhythm of hopping-like series of light steps, she went towards Shuri.

Incidentally, when she arrived there I released the『Absolute Command』.

Needless to say, she was screaming from embarrassment.

◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆

Because our magic was drained thanks to the Poison Slime we took a small rest before resuming.

“Now for….. The final floor…..” (Tamaki)

Pulverizing the Wight Knights before her into pebbles, Tamaki grumbled.

“Work without the complaining, shield.” (Daichi)

So, I put in a bit of pep talk.

“Don’t call me a shield! How could you treat me like that…. My stamina was at 300 you know!?” (Tamaki)

“Didn’t it turn out fine? Lots of things could happen in three minutes. Like defeating that giant light monster.” (Daichi)

“It’s safe to say you could’ve just waited three minutes.” (Shuri)

“Shuri-chan!? If that happened, I would have died!?” (Tamaki)

“Yui-chan. I’ve told you before to use honorifics for Daichi-sama.” (Shuri)

Shuri splendidly passed the topic of the conversation like a dodgeball.

“U-……. But, I’ve been thinking Shuri-chan. That Katsuragi? That fat, ugly otaku? Shuri-chan is surely better than this guy.” (Tamaki)

“Yui-chan.” (Shuri)

Shuri interrupted Tamaki’s words. The tone of her voice was lower than usual, anyone could tell that she was angry.

“Wh-what?” (Tamaki)

“You don’t know Katsuragi-kun’s kindness. You don’t know Katsuragi-kun’s strength. You don’t know Katsuragi-kun’s suffering. Because you, including me, did not try to get to know Katsuragi-kun.” (Shuri)

“…… That’s….” (Tamaki)

“I have confidence that I love Katsuragi-kun even if his appearance returns to how it was before. Not in compensation, but that these are my honest feelings. I love Katsuragi-kun.” (Shuri)

Shuri twined her arms around me and drew close. Her expression was really happy. Because of that, Tamaki was unable to answer back.

“Therefore, from now on, I don’t permit any insults towards him.” (Shuri)

Shuri’s sharp gaze pierced through Tamaki.

“Absolutely, I do not permit it.” (Shuri)

Shuri declared strongly.

“……” (Tamaki)

Tamaki stopped talking. She remained silent. She seems to have understood just how strong Shuri's feelings were.

That it exceeded her friendship with Tamaki.

…….. I felt ashamed analyzing it like that.

『……』(Everyone)

Everyone fell silent, and the atmosphere became awkward. Though I'm not worried, I wonder if this will affect our teamwork in the upcoming fight against Fontra……

…… At that time, should I use Absolute Command?

"……. Sorry, Shuri-chan. I still don't understand." (Tamaki)

Like that, Tamaki turned back and resumed hunting demons to continue clearing the dungeon.

For the first time, dark clouds hung over our dungeon capture.

Chapter 13 - 『The Confrontation』

“Finally the 70th Floor huh……” (Daichi)

I mutter with deep emotion. Because【Rigal’s Den】ended on the 60th Floor, this is the first time I’ve been this deep.

The stairs room of this floor was found easily.

Fantra’s magic flowed out. This magic wouldn’t lose to the magic of that crystal.

Feeling its extraordinary concentration, Leadred seemed to be convinced.

With her leading us, we came upon a very modern-looking door.

There were doorknobs on each side of it.

Instructing them here would be the right thing to do.

“…… Hey, Leadred.” (Daichi)

“What is it?” (Leadred)

“Fantra is a tactician right?” (Daichi)

“That is correct.” (Leadred)

“Then, what is with this door?” (Daichi)

“……. Don’t ask me.” (Leadred)

Leadred sat down and seemed worried. She seems strange.

Teaching the enemy your position. This was either really smart or really bad.

In order to not be defeated by the demon Fantra, we began planning.

"….. Though trivial, isn't it too early? I want to quickly return to the surface." (Tamaki)

"……. You, even though you were originally a hero….." (Daichi)

"Shut up. I didn't think we would do this all at once. Doesn't Katsuragi just have an excessive amount of power? Because even if he dies he'll just revive." (Tamaki)

"…….. Yui-chan." (Shuri)

"I'm fine watching Shuri-chan for Katsuragi. That way, Katsuragi is relieved." (Tamaki)

"Yui-chan shouldn't complain then." (Shuri)

"That isn't alright, though. I want Shuri-chan to be safe. I'll celebrate when you separate from Katsuragi." (Tamaki)

"….. I want to be with Daichi-sama always. Even if I am weak, I won't regret it even if I die." (Shuri)

Looking objectively, Shuri's resolution was indeed abnormal. If I weren't the master myself, I would also search for the reasons. Tamaki thought so too.

"…… Are you being threatened into saying that? Shuri-chan, you've been strange." (Tamaki)

“I know. However, it can’t be helped. Nothing will stop me. Therefore, I’ll follow him through thick and thin. Also, didn’t I already say?” (Shuri)

Shuri pointed the dagger she was accustomed to using at Tamaki.

“I won’t forgive anyone speaking badly of Daichi-sama.” (Shuri)

Looking at her gaze, she really means it….. This is bad.

“Shuri” (Daichi)

“Leave it alone for now.” (Leadred)

I take Shuri’s hand and Leadred puts the tip of her sword on Tamaki’s neck, holding her in place.

“Don’t you think it would be bad if we were to crack over something like this now that we are a family? Don’t worry about what is said to me. If a person isn’t looked down on they can’t establish superiority over me, so it’s fine to leave it.” (Daichi)

“But, to do such a thing to Daichi-sama.” (Shuri)

“I don’t want Shuri to dirty her hands by such a foolish thing.” (Daichi)

“……..I see……..” (Shuri)

Shuri reluctantly withdrew while saying so.

I lost interest in Tamaki. I wouldn’t care if she died while fighting, though it would be good if she survives.

If I can use her, that is good.

I use『Absolute Command』to silence her and force her to grasp the doorknob.

“Tamaki, you will begin the preemptive attack. Sound good?” (Daichi)

“……” (Tamaki)

Tamaki selfishly shook her head back and forth with a *KokuKoku*. She readied a Freezing Lance with her right hand. Leadred was on standby to her left. As the door opened, Shuri and I would both charge into the room as the door was opened. Tamaki would then launch the Freezing Lance from where she was. It was that kind of plan.

“……At worst, are you prepared to die?” (Daichi)

The three showed affirmative reactions. When they confirmed, I began the count down.

“Three, two, one—-go!” (Daichi)

With a clank, both doors were pushed and opened towards the inside. We jumped in as we confirmed they were open.

However, contrary to our expectations the room lacked a floor.

“Eh-……?” (Daichi)

“It’s a li-……!” (Shuri)

“Ba-…..!” (Leadred)

“—–!?” (Tamaki)

『Uwahhhhhh!?』(Everyone)

There was no place to land, so we shrieked while falling. We could not see the bottom in the darkness.

“Shining!” (Daichi)

I fired the light down. It extended into the deep hole and showed no signs of changing.

“Everyone, join hands!” (Daichi)

We each grabbed the hands of whoever we were next to. To avoid falling apart we form a circular shape.

After falling for some time, we finally see the end.

The ground was littered with the ice crystals we’ve seen until now like a pincushion.

“This is a lie riiiiiight!?” (Shuri)

If we continued like this we would definitely be annihilated. However, the fact that this was ice was a blessing in disguise.

One of my slaves was an expert in Fire magic.

“Leadred!” (Daichi)

Shuri and I let go of her hand and she kicks against the wall to gain some distance from us so that we would not be indirectly harmed.

She began chanting magic that would overcome this situation.

“Sovereign spirits of fire. Burn everything that blocks my path. Leave nothing behind, reduce all to ash.” (Leadred)

A scorching heat whirled around Leadred's right arm. An incredible spiral of fire erupted from her and everything was completely burned.

"Pillar of Prominence!" (Leadred) [TN: Kanji for White-Hot Blazing Column.]

The manifested pillar of flames ate through the ice. In an instant, the ice needles vanished.

"Berserk Tempest!" (Daichi)

To get rid of the remaining flames near us, I used the higher class magic『Berserk Tempest』.

With the danger gone, Leadred used her arm to do a forward roll to absorb the impact of the landing.

"Shield! Be pinned under Shuri!" (Daichi)

"Certainly!" (Tamaki)

Mimicking Leadred, I succeed in landing. As a result of Tamaki's protection, Shuri came out uninjured.

The shield's use for Shuri is satisfactory.

"Sh-Shuri-chan. Are you unhurt? Are you alright?" (Tamaki)

"Y-yeah. Somehow. How about Yui-chan?" (Shuri)

"I used multiple layers of thin ice to lose momentum before landing so I'm alright. Though I'm relieved Shuri-chan isn't hurt….." (Tamaki)

Tamaki expressed a truly happy smile.

She was lying. No ice could prevent that sort of impact from falling that far. When she landed, I saw her grimace in pain.

Shuri was also aware of it. Therefore, she stretched her hands out to Tamaki to help her stand.

I noticed that I was envying her.

In that case, maybe I put off discarding Tamaki because I wanted to see such a moment.

I've also wished for a friend of the same sex. Of course, Samejima and the other classmates were impossible.

Even though Leadred was a woman she was filling that spot.

"…….. I had a feeling that helping you all would have been considerably impolite….. Was it my imagination?" (Fantra)

"It was your imagination. Though, hey. The 'criminal who made this trap'-san makes his appearance." (Daichi)

Just like that, with globes of light gently radiating light from the palm of his hand, the wide space brightened immediately and reflected off the crystals.

There was a man sitting with his legs crossed on a splendid throne in the interior.

Wavy golden hair. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that his appearance his features were sculpted.

However, there was one flaw.

There was no splendor in his eyes. Instead, they were impure.

I felt no life from them. This fellow looked dead while being alive.

It seemed like a contradiction but I was confident. Because those eyes were familiar. Since coming to this world I've seen these dead eyes often.

"Welcome, heroes. I serve as this dungeon's guardian under Messiah as her demon army's Chief of Staff—Fantra Angas." (Fantra)

Following his light indroduction, Fantra Angas gave a smile and a chill ran through me.

"I believe I have to kill you all now——you have my regards." (Fantra)

Chapter 14 - 『Someone Loved, Someone Unloved, Someone Who Loves』

I smiled fearlessly so that Fantra would not see me shaking from his sudden declaration of war.

"…… Oi oi. Being that cruel from the start. Let's get along." (Daichi)

"Saying something like that is an amusing joke, Hero. Did you really think that? With your abilities, you aren't worth serving." (Fantra)

"Even without fighting, you say something like that." (Daichi)

"It's fine to say. Well, I've seen all of your fights." (Fantra)

Fantra picked up the crystal that was laying horizontally in a cup next to the throne, showing it to us.

"Do you all know why the dungeon was lined with this crystal?" (Fantra)

"…… To drive us mad?" (Daichi)

"Nonsense. Its purpose is to observe adventurers. I slowly give the crystal some of my magic. And, everything infused with my magic becomes my eyes, my hands, and my feet. It becomes my servant." (Fantra)

Fantra continued talking proudly.

“Because of that I was able to receive and appreciate your fights on each floor. Though Leadred being here surprised me….. Your battles were beautifully unintelligent.” (Fantra)

Fantra jeered at us. He scornfully laughed with a *Foon* sound.

If I got mad I would fight and die like an idiot. I was getting annoyed.

“Beauty has nothing to do with fighting though?” (Daichi)

“It does. Though possible, a person that possesses a surplus of ability can’t just go to defeat his enemy and kill them. Something like tying with you would be out of the question. I have plans for every situation to some extent, you see.” (Fantra)

Finishing with all he wanted to say, Fantra stood up at last.

“Therefore, I will teach you. The viewpoint of a person of war.” (Fantra)

He thrust his right hand out. What kind of attack will he begin with, we begin taking this into consideration and prepare for the various possibilities.

“Bloom—-Ice Flower” (Fantra)

He snapped his fingers. The crystals at his feet cracked and from the fissures a flower that wore an air of absolute zero bloomed. It stole the heat.

“”””Fireball! “””” (Daichi, Tamaki, Shuri, Leadred)

All four judged that the situation was dangerous and shot a fireball at their own feet, slightly escaping the restraints.

Though we’d probably be burned, it was much more preferable to being imprisoned in ice.

“You judged the situation and used Fire magic without hesitation. To the extent that you would injure yourselves, I would have expected the fear of pain to stop you from doing so.” (Fantra)

“This way is better than dying.” (Daichi)

“Foolish. You will die without pain encased in ice.” (Fantra)

“Sorry, but this isn’t that place I’m scheduled to die!” (Daichi)

I severed my feet with a swing of my sword and kicked off the ground keeping a low profile. Fantra dodged by jumping. However, Leadred had broken into a run with me. Her longsword swung full speed at Fantra to reap his consciousness.

His eyes were fixed on my slashing attack. Leadred was in his blind spot.

The attack is unavoidable!

“Multi-Guard!” (Fantra) [TN: Kanji for Multiple Layers of Ice]

Countering my expectations, the shield of ice prevented Leadred’s surprise attack. Fantra was superior in this exchange and never broke his composure.

However, we are not two people. We are four.

Tamaki who had been hiding behind Leadred and Shuri who took a long path around when Fantra jumped to dodge each invoked magic.

“Freezing Lance!” (Tamaki)

“Cyclone!” (Shuri)

The speed, as well as power I have nothing to complain about. Both of the girls displayed an equally perfect performance.

However, neither reached him.

“Therefore, because of your skillful display! Ice Stream” (Fantra)

Snap, Snap

Their magic was flung away and smashed into the crystals in another direction, a large amount of ice began to overflow and swallow their magic.

It followed the magic back to them freezing everything along the way.

“Shuri!” (Daichi)

I jumped at her and we both rolled horizontally over the floor to escape.

Around the same time an explosive sound echoed through the air. Though slightly obscured by steam, there was the form of a demon fighting back with balls of flame.

Exposing the ice to high temperatures, it sublimated.

Skillfully overdoing it, Leadred landed near us.

“Are there no injuries?” (Leadred)

“Light scratches. Nothing that would be an obstacle in combat. Apart from that I need you to listen…. Shuri and Tamaki, I want you to destroy the crystal. During that time, Leadred and I will distract that creepy guy.” (Daichi)

Realizing the importance the crystal’s offense and defense was to the fight the two immediately took action.

So, Leadred and I did the same.

“Though it’ll be hard for Leadred, bare this burden.” (Daichi)

“Don’t worry. Besides, I’ve wanted to fight him. This is just a good chance.” (Leadred)

She was indeed having fun and laughing vibrantly. This fellow really does enjoy fighting.

“I appreciate you saying that.” (Daichi)

Informing her of my gratitude, I face back forward. As usual, Fantra displayed a sad face, sighing.

“Are you foolish? Saying that? The crystal is also my eyes. Even if you start a diversified attack, I can see through it.” (Fantra)

“There’s no reason to believe what you are saying.” (Daichi)

“Though, with this will you understand? After all this crystal is also a part of my body.” (Fantra)

“Fortunately, if this crystal disappears your war potential will also lower drastically.” (Daichi)

“I see, and those girls are to concentrate only on breaking the crystal?” (Fantra)

He threw a sidelong glance at Shuri’s group.

Of course, I have no reason to let him to go over there.

Leadred shot an Ogre Flame. Fantra threw a ball of ice in response.

“Your opponents are us you know?” (Daichi)

“Leadred……. Why a woman like you would fall and group with a hero, it is a mystery. Though it would be unexpected….. Were you defeated?” (Fantra)

“Ah. Your beloved strategies will be defeated. The hero’s cooperation exceeded my expectations…… Hey, Fantra. I believe this existence will become one that will guide us. How about it? Can’t we group together?” (Leadred)

“You are well aware of my character, Leadred. Either he loses or defeats me and gains everything.” (Fantra)

“Well, that response was expected. Then, how about we start?” (Leadred)

Leadred moved her saliva patterned sword’s pommel vertical to the ground in advance. She dropped her waist a little, moving her right heel back.

I also pointed my sword to him so that a line could extend out and intersect with his throat.

Responding to us, he produced an ice sword and just like the royal palace swordsmen he drew his right arm close and put his right leg out, taking a half body stance. The posture looks like fencing.

“”””…….””” (Daichi, Fantra, Leadred)

We faced him. Silence permeated the air. The first to break the stillness of the water’s surface——.

“Quick!” (Leadred)

—– Was Leadred.

Fantra retreated from the shockwave caused by her sword's downward swing. In order to not give him a chance to regain his posture I changed my grip to an underhand grip.

A red line appeared aimed towards Fantra's body.

"Line Drive!" (Daichi)

"Multi-Guard!" (Fantra) [TN: Kanji for Multiple Walls of Ice]

The ice wall was crushed into pieces. I had to take care of pieces that were scattered.

Closing the distance in a step, I struck. Fantra took a risk and crouched with a leg sweep.

I acted as though I fell for it and stabbed him with my sword. Fantra took the thrust.

"Yo…. o-!?" (Daichi)

I, who loosened my tension because the attack was sure to hit, was thrown overhead. Turning around mid-air, I landed on my feet was saw an icy knife thrown towards me.

"Ku-! Wind Slice!" (Daichi)

With my frantic blade of wind, I suppressed it and was knocked sideways with a light cut on my cheek.

"Oraa!" (Daichi)

"Foon!" (Fantra) [TL: This dude's sounds make me lol]

Leadred and I performed a pincer attack. Fantra caught her longsword between his fingers. An ice wall appeared, and Wind Slice was used in response.

“I didn’t hear a chant!” (Daichi) ?

“Sword Freeze!” (Fantra)

I followed suit and attacked just after. He stopped my attack by creating another ice sword with his empty hand.

The moment our swords met, an unpleasant *Paki* sound was heard. Ice corroded my sword.

“Seiya-!” (Daichi)

Fantra jumped and spun like a spinning top. Though I tried to counter him, the centrifugal force joined his attack and broke my abdomen.

I threw the handle of my broken sword in response. It missed.

Leadred repeated a backhand spring away, while I took a step backwards to gain some distance.

“Tch…. Fighting against him is as unpleasant as usual….” (Leadred)

“Ah…. It kinda seems there’s too much of a difference in our strength right?” (Daichi)

I rock my shoulder and breathe, even Leadred’s brow is sweating.

Nevertheless, Fantra’s breathing hasn’t increased at all. No sweat, and he still has on that faintly cold smile. Furthermore there is a problem……

The hole from the part that I pierced is empty. However, there is no red liquid that should have been coming out from there.

Like this, is he an undead……?

“Uuu~n, you still have some ways to go. Even if I assume you can’t use all of your power because Leadred is in the room, for a hero cooperating with her to only be able to wound me ….. It’s hard to express how disappointed I am.” (Fantra)

The sole wound from a moment ago, the light from the crystal erased it.

“Are you coming to grasp the situation you are in now?” (Fantra) [TL: Think I missed something of what he’s trying to say here. 「もう少し状況を把握して動いたらどうだい？」]

“You made us come to you after ensnaring your territory with traps.” (Daichi)

He was actually able to absorb the crystal. There was almost no crystal left in our vicinity.

Shuri’s group consisted of half of us and was working hard to decrease its amount.

Though I didn’t understand the mechanism of his nonexistent chanting, it wasn’t impossible to read the cause, just hard.

The longer this was prolonged, the more unfavorable this guy would become. The progress of battle would decline.

With these four, it was possible to fight. To kill.

I breathed in heavily, and vomited.

After this is the crucial moment.

“Prepare for me to kill you and become my slave.” (Daichi)

As I said so, my concentration improved again. I took position in an area that had no crystal.

The present conditions were perfect.

——–Nevertheless, Fantra looked at us and begins to laugh loudly.

“Enslave me? It is impossible! Because, you still have not understood!” (Fantra)

Pachin

The sound of Fantra’s fingers snapping remained in my ear eerily.

“—When did I say that I was only able to invoke magic from unused crystals?” (Fantra)

I simultaneously understood the meaning of his words with the ice spear piercing me through the chest.

“…….. Goho-!?” (Daichi)

Blood began to spill from my mouth. I began to collapse but endured it, though only remained on one knee.

Though, this is dangerous. I know because I’ve experienced this many times. The pain of death.

My head was filled with intense pain. No blood streamed from the wound. The spear emanated cold air that froze my body.

“….. Aaa!” (Daichi)

Ignoring the pain from the attack by shutting my teeth by force, I pulled out the ice spear. As a blessing in disguise the wound was already frozen, so it didn’t hurt as much.

“Hero-sa—–gu-!” (Leadred)

Leadred tried to jump over but fell to the floor when a chain of ice started entangling around her feet and killed her momentum. With the chain twining around her as it was, she was unable to move.

“Shit, this ice! Oni—“ (Leadred)

“Freeze” (Fantra)

“————!?” (Leadred)

In order to stop Leadred’s magic chant, her mouth was frozen.

“Leadred. Be quiet and sit still for a little while. I also don’t want to kill a comrade…… now then.” (Fantra)

“Aga……!“ (Daichi)

“I will not tolerate you, hero.” (Fantra)

I was pulled up by the hair and subsequently hit. This was repeated over and over again.

Nose broke. Teeth broke. Cheek caved in. Constant pain until all feeling was lost. Only my right eye was barely functioning.

Fantra’s face was distorted like a sadist. A face like Samejima’s. A criminal who gets pleasure from hurting another person.

"…… I am weak…. huh?" (Daichi)

"That is so. However, the most inexcusable thing….. Messiah fell in love with you!" (Fantra) [TL: o.0]

His anger surged again, I was thrown and he trampled on my wound.

"Uwahhh!?" (Daichi)

The ice that closed the wound cracked and once again the pain came back. Even hearing my screams this guy's anger is not calmed at all.

"To receive Messiah-sama's affection to this degree and given that power, someone of my greatness and as one who has received the goddesses' affection will not permit it!" (Fantra)

It's painful. Stop it. Stop it….!

"You stole it! I forever have and always will bequeath my heart to her!" (Fantra)

Don't you know? The one who gave me power is Claria. Not the demon.

"Therefore, I am proving that I am stronger than you by defeating you here. Then, she'll notice me too! You are disillusioned to think you can defeat me, I am the one who is loved!!" (Fantra)

I had neither a response nor the energy to do so. Preferably he kills me soon. And then, I'll kill him after strengthening.

After stepping on me and becoming satisfied, Fantra moved his foot away while breathing roughly.

"Be at ease. I'll put you in order after you taste the same pain as me." (Fantra)

I had a bad feeling from his remark. It became reality.

“First of all, that important girl over there, I’ll kill that important girl!” (Fantra)

Fantra removed what blocked line of sight between Shuri and me, reddened with my own blood, with his hand.

“You….. How dare you do that to Katsuragi-kun!!” (Shuri)

She piled her hands on top of each other, projecting them out in front of her.

“Ah, that won’t help! Shuri-chan!” (Tamaki)

“Oh? Going to challenge me with magic? Interesting.” (Fantra)

Boiling with anger, she shakes off the composed Tamaki and begins to recite magic. I don’t know when she memorized it, the chant for the magic that I am skilled in.

“Emperor of wind. Thou, hew down the one who obstructs this one’s noble path!” (Shuri)

“Emperor of ice. Thou, freeze the one who obstructs this one’s noble path!” (Fantra)

Stop it, Shuri. Run away. Don’t assault him directly, run away. Today, you can’t win.

However, absolute command cannot be used. My intentions don’t reach her.

“Blow, Storm King of Military Rule, establish here. Turn everything to dust, and return all to the Earth!” (Shuri)

Move. Move it. Scrape just a little more strength together. You only have to move even a little. Therefore, move. Please, move.

“Berserk Tempest!!” (Shuri)

“Blizzard Prison!” (Fantra)

The emperor-class magics manifested at almost the same time and crashed into each other.

When magic of the same class collides with each other, what decides the victor?

The answer is easy. Strength.

“Ku-!” (Shuri)

According to the law, Shuri is pushed. At this rate, she will become victim to that ice.

Such a thing won’t do.

“Wiiiiiind!!” (Daichi)

The word that was finally spoken became a trigger, the wind supported my body so that it wouldn’t fall. Moreover, my speed was increased heading to where she was.

However, it’s still not in time.

Shuri is done for.

In addition, Heaven-Style Wind was added.

Be in time, be in time, be in time!

I felt in a hurry. Only a mere few seconds after invoking the magic felt like hours.

Shuri was in a steadily worsening situation.

—-This time, I had forgotten.

“Shuri-chan!!” (Tamaki)

There was one more person who thought of her as important.

Tamaki jumped to Shuri and pushed her out of the way.

Tamaki was now in the same spot she had been in.

Shuri went out of range of that guy’s magic. Her safety was guaranteed.

I didn’t need to go there any more.

…….. However.

“Rejected.” (Daichi)

“Kya-“ (Tamaki)

I didn’t release the magic, and thrust Tamaki away to Shuri.

“Ka-Katsuragi…..!?” (Tamaki)

Tamaki looked at me with eyes of disbelief.

“Don’t misunderstand. It is my duty to help Shuri.” (Daichi)

I wanted to say that, I am satisfied.

That guy’s magic rained down.

“Triple Guard!” (——)

I heard someone’s voice recite magic, my view was dyed pure white.

◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆

“Rejected.” (Daichi)

“Kya-“ (Tamaki)

Even though it would defend Shuri, I dashed out recklessly without thinking about anything.

Shuri would be pushed, I would be the magic’s victim.

Nevertheless, Katsuragi is there.

“Ka-Katsuragi…..!?” (Tamaki)

When that man glanced at me, he said.

“Don’t misunderstand. It is my duty to help Shuri.” (Daichi)

Why did you come to help? Why does Shuri follow this man?

For an instant, I saw why.

I had thought that Shuri was compulsed to interact with this guy. Since this situation seemed to be like one of Katsuragi’s favorite anime, because Shuri was following this man to the point of delirium.

However, Katsuragi was enduring the pain, despite the hole in his chest, he came to defend Shuri though he was already collapsing.

I saw no hesitation from him.

I was coming to help Shuri-chan without even reflecting on his death.

Until the ice magic dissolves, to the extent that the pain is not felt until destroyed, it is not possible to die.

In other words, Katsuragi's ability would not activate.

Katsuragi, to that extent——he loves Shuri so much.

While thinking so, I naturally opened my mouth.

"Triple Guard!" (Tamaki)

The layers of the soul-class ice magic was placed over Katsuragi's upper body. Though I wanted to defend his whole body, I know that my magic would not stand a chance. Therefore, the area was shrank to raise its strength.

So long as Katsuragi can safely commit suicide, 『Revenge of the Resented 』 can be invoked.

Fantra's magic covered Katsuragi and ran out. The places that were covered by my triple ice layers were safe.

"Katsuragi!" (Tamaki)

I ran up to Katsuragi. As for the lower half of his body, it was mortifyingly frozen.

"Are you alright, Katsuragi!?" (Tamaki)

"…. If you are worrying about me some sort of natural disaster must have happened….." (Daichi)

"Sh-shut up! ….. I was wrong!" (Tamaki)

Katsuragi's face looked confused. As though he was seeing a rare animal.

"…… You're serious, did you hit your head?" (Daichi)

"Making such a joke in this situation!? You can heal like you did before! It's difficult to say something like this but, could you die?" (Tamaki)

"No, my arms were frozen. It's impossible." (Daichi)

"Then, I'll kill you." (Tamaki)

"A senior slave cannot attack the master." (Daichi)

"Oh, come on! In that case, your pouch, I'll look through it!" (Tamaki)

I looked through Katsuragi's pouch. A potion….. the yanu leaf wrapped in 3 pieces of cloth, a map. Provisions….

It's no good. No fruit of Freya can cure the frozen condition!

While searching for something, Katsuragi's freezing continued.

"Katsuragi! Do you not have anything!?" (Tamaki)

"…….. Wait. Here ……" (Daichi)

Katsuragi suddenly gripped my shoulders and brought his face to my here. Then, he murmured something into my ear.

"—–!?" (Tamaki)

"Sh-Shuri-chan, bring her….." (Tamaki)

"This isn't this time for that, there is a possibility that he will target Shuri. For Shuri's sake it is more convenient like this." (Daichi)

“B-but I also… It’s my first time….” (Tamaki)

“Is that something you should say in this situation?” (Daichi)

“D-do you think so?” (Tamaki)

“Yeah.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi was determined. I also understand why this is necessary.

The preparation from now must be done immediately.

“If it’s unpleasant, I’ll will use absolute command.” (Daichi)

“I-it’s different! A-at least, my timing….” (Tamaki)

“Though it’s unfortunate, there is no time to have hesitation.” (Daichi)

“…. I understand! I know!” (Tamaki)

I put my lips on Katsuragi’s and he entrusted his energy to me. I didn’t think that Katsuragi would be forceful, but he violated my mouth with his tongue without reservation.

Th-this guy….!

However, it was strange to find that I didn’t find it that unpleasant.

“Puha……” (Tamaki)

The long kiss ended, and I was liberated.

“I entrust it all to you. I’ll gamble it on your friendship with Shuri.” (Daichi)

Friendship. These kinds of things were impossible to the Katsuragi that entered high school.

I'm sure that he has also long forgotten those things, as he was able to entrust his, Leadred's and Shuri's fate to the person who he trusted the least.

Then, a response was necessary.

Because I will not allow my friendship with Shuri to lose to anyone.

"Leave it to me. My friendship with Shuri is one hundred times as strong as yours. Without fail ——– I will win." (Tamaki)

Hearing my declaration full of overflowing confidence, Katsuragi smiled.

And so he went to sleep in the ice.

Chapter 15 - 『*Demon Killing*』

“Ah…….” (Shuri)

When I got up, Katsuragi-kun and Yui-chan were kissing.

Suddenly, when I heard the screams of sorrow, I had forgotten myself and shot a Berserk Tempest at Fantra.

My enemy also invoked ice emperor-class magic. I lacked composure this time. I had forgotten that it was deplorable to clash the same class of magic against each other.

Naturally, my magic lost when it collided with 『Ice Jail Prison』. However, it was still good.

It was my mistake. It would have been my responsibility even if I died. I believed that Katsuragi-kun would surely win.

However, I was blown out of the way. By my close friend, Yui-chan.

She talked to me for a long time when we were on the road, apologizing and worrying. I returned it with a cold behavior.

Despite all that, she tried to protect me with her body. Perhaps, so that day would not be repeated….

However, it was still too early to be surprised. There was a person who pushed Yuina outside of range as well.

Katsuragi-kun.

He is a gentle person. A person with a very, very warm heart. A person who makes others happy.

He saved me. Back then, he didn't give up, even though the number of cruel things I did to him weren't few.

He is such a person. Yuina-chan might not have been able to leave him alone. He is an important existence that can lavish everyone with his kindness.

There was a pain in my chest.

And now, my fears became reality.

Katsuragi French kissed Yui-chan. She didn't show an unpleasant reaction, and responded.

His body abruptly lost strength.

Katsuragi-kun said something to Yui-chan. Katsuragi-kun smiled back when Yui-chan answered.

And then, he was confined in ice.

"….. Ah…… ah….." (Shuri)

What did Katsuragi-kun say? Yui-chan must have come to like him.

No, after disliking him to that extent it is impossible for something like that.

There's only one way to make sure.

From his mouth, from Katsuragi's mouth, I want to hear it.

I want him to say『It's different』.

I want him to tell me『I like only Shuri』.

I want him to embrace me.『Mine』

To do that, for that reason.

"……. Have to kill." (Shuri)

That guy, I have to kill the man who is laughing loudly at Katsuragi-kun being covered in ice.

I slowly, unsteadily get up.

My thoughts are scrambled.

Sloppy. They are chaotic.

Then, in that case, I must throw them away.

I only need to think of killing him now. So, I do just that. As long as Katsurag-kun lives, it is fine.

"Demon Killing, invoke." (Shuri)

My body that seemed to be severely weighted down like lead became light.

I don't have time. I have to end it within five minutes.

"Oya? You still wish to fight? With me even. Do you not understand the difference in our strength from the magic contest a moment ago?" (Fantra)

"If it isn't magic, I will win." (Shuri)

If magic is a threat, it is fine to just not let it be used. The me right now can do such a thing.

“You are foolish! To try such a thing!” (Fantra)

“I won’t know unless I try. Well, let’s start.” (Shuri)

I cut the air several times with my dagger….. Yeah, fast.

“I’m willing to overlook this you know? Right now, I feel terrific. Moreover you and I have both been thrown away. I don’t have a hobby in beating up brokenhearted women.” (Fantra)

“….. Shut up. I haven’t been thrown away. That was necessary.” (Shuri)

Yeah. Katsuragi will do anything that is necessary. I won’t hesitate because I must kill this person. I trust Yui-chan has come up with a strategy to overcome this situation.

I move in rhythmic light steps with a *TonTon*. I close my eyes and concentrate on my awareness.

“….. Oh, this might be good. Then become nourishment for my magic!” (Fantra)

Fantra snapped his fingers.

At that time, I—–accelerated.

Just a little, it didn’t even take a second.

Faster than the eye can see, I ran around behind Fantra.

“…… Eh?” (Fantra)

Fantra hadn’t noticed yet. I pulled my arm behind my back.

“Here.” (Shuri)

“Eh…….!?” (Fantra)

My fist exploded in his face. Fresh blood erupted at the moment of impact.

“……..!” (Fantra)

He stepped back unsteadily after losing his eyesight and hearing, and with a *Pachin* snapped his fingers.

A mass of light concentrated around his face, restoring it.

“Y-you! What in the world are you!?” (Fantra)

I hit him hard in the face again. However, this time there was a layer of ice to act as a cushion in response.

Distancing from him would be dangerous.

I drew closer to a dagger’s distance from him and engaged in physical combat.

“Yaa!” (Shuri)

“Multiple Ice Wall! Multi-Guarder!” (Fantra)

When he understood that it was not possible to prevent me with a layer of ice, he instantly switched to an ice wall. I predicted this.

I took off rotating in the air and launched into an axe kick. Fantra was unable to conceal his surprise at the abrupt change of course.

“Gu-……!” (Fantra)

He crossed his arms above him to receive the attack and took it. Fantra’s guard was broken by the ballistic shock, as easily as snapping pond weeds.

“Aaaahhh!?” (Fantra)

Fantra glared at me while screaming from intense pain.

“You, how dare you! Ice—“ (Fantra)

“No you don’t!” (Shuri)

He flew to the wall from a kick before his chant was completed. A large crater is made on the wall, and he falls feebly without the power to get up.

I cannot let this chance go. Before Fantra has a chance to regenerate, I cut off his arms.

I did not slow the attacks with my hand.

Gripping his neck, I throw him at the wall. I hit him with a right roundhouse kick followed by a right straight. I used the roundhouse kick because it has the highest destructive power before driving him in with the straight.

His head hanged loosely, and was no longer breathing.

“Because of you, Katsuragi-kun is…..” (Shuri)

I aimed by dagger at his heart and tore at him with all of my strength. Altering its position to an underhanded grip, I swung at him.

Vertically, diagonally, sideways.

I cut him into pieces. Finely, so that he would never appear in front of us again.

He became a lump of meat.

I finally stopped cutting him with my dagger when I became nauseated. Nothing left of the remnants before me looked human.

“Haa……. haa…… haa…..” (Shuri)

I killed him.

His skull was crush, his heart split, his body sundered. He is unable to make use of his fingers to activate the crystals, nor capable of chanting magic.

I did it. With this Katsuragi will return!

I was wrapped in a sense of accomplishment and glanced in his direction expecting that.

However, Katsuragi-kun was still in the ice.

“….. Eh, why……?” (Shuri)

Fantra was defeated. He was deprived of life by my hands.

Yet…. Why is Katsuragi not free!?

Was the requirement different!? Does Fantra have to cancel the magic……? Or is there another cause?

“Shuri-chan! Behind you!” (Tamaki)

Yui-chan’s voice brought me out of my thoughts and returned me to reality.

Turning around, I saw Fantra’s regeneration almost completed and was approaching me with sword in hand. I tried to avoid him by stepping back—-suddenly, my body received many times the effect of gravity, and was only able to take a single step.

Why…… This timing, the effects from Demon Killing ended……

My chest was pierced and I collapsed on the spot.

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AUTHOR'S COMMENT

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By the way, here is Shuri's status during this fight:

＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝

Hamakaze Juri　Occupation: Slave　Level: 72

Stamina：3170→2260→4068→8136

Magic：3640→2640→4752→9504

Physical：2830→5094→10188

Endurance：2170→3906→7812

Agility：1690→3042→6084

＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝＝

※『Loyalty』『Demon killing』Simultaneous activation.

Chapter 16 - 『*Revival*』

Bad. This is very bad.

My entire body was covered with cold sweat.

Shuri-chan was done. She was pierced through the back. I want to immediately dash to where she is.

However, I need to be calm. If I am defeated here, we all really will be annihilated.

Originally I was going to have Shuri-chan break Leadred-san's chains and make it a 3:1 fight.

However, Shuri has be struck down. Leadred-san has been restricted by chains that are physically impossible for me to destroy.

She was turning pale after body temperature was being sapped. Breathing must also be difficult. I think Leadred-san's strength is what is keeping her alive.

In other words, I have no choice but to do everything alone.

"Ahahahahaha! It is regrettable, you! It was a precaution I took, just in case. I'm revived automatically if I lose consciousness one time in this room. In exchange, all of the crystals' magic has been exhausted." (Fantra)

Fantra raised his foot and tramped on Shuri's head.

“It was painful you know? My whole body being hacked into pieces.” (Fantra)

He ground her head into the ground.

It’s no good. I will definitely pay for it. If I attack in a rage it will be The End.

I clutched my fists and dug in my fingernails in to endure it.

“I did not expect you to be able to move like that. I’ll make you my slave and put you in your place after I kill the hero…… Well.” (Fantra)

Both of his eyes turned to me.

“Open” (Tamaki)

Status confirmed. Remaining magic…… 1380. I shouldn’t use chant omission. I’ll use everything I have to escape.

I looked at my watch. Shuri earned about six minutes. Then, I have to double that to live.

Until then, I’ll attract his attention.

“You. That was unexpected a little while ago.” (Fantra)

“What?” (Tamaki)

Do not let him sense my fear. I must keep my confident atmosphere.

I must hide my area of expertise and put on airs and use my surroundings to survive.

I need to bluff……!

“The hero surely likes that girl…. But his favorite was not her!” (Tamaki)

“You are misunderstanding it…… he likes her. And I like him.” (Tamaki)

“Misunderstand? Still, so long as I was looking he only put his hand out for this girl. Rather, I remember you suffering abuse.” (Fantra)

“T-that is just the peculiar way Katsuragi displays his love! Because I have a body that feels pleasure from being beaten!” (Tamaki)

……. What am I saying about myself, I can’t believe this. Fantra laughed in derision.

“That so, that so? You are one of those so-called perverts then huh.” (Fantra)

“Y-yeah! I’m sinful!” (Tamaki)

I was desperate. Even if I was considered a pervert, it was fine. I’ll do whatever I need to disguise myself.

This compensation was cheap when compared with my life.

“Excuse me, but you should also have someone you love like crazy… Messiah-sama… Isn’t it? That woman, in what way does she love you?”

There’s a basis for conversation. A topic that my opponent is interested in.

He completely changed earlier and gave off an envy of Katsuragi. He’s sure to bite…!

“…… I see. You were stalling for time until he dies?” (Fantra)

Why, how did he collect himself at such a time….!?

“S-such a thing isn’t true. I was purely interested.” (Tamaki)

“Your lie is no good. Your voice is off. You can’t hide how you are shaking.” (Fantra)

U-…… I’m at a loss for words. Fantra started to speak proudly.

“It was disappointing, but inviting you all here did excite me. I defeated the hero. The person who was receiving Messiah-sama’s affection is gone. Now her affection will pour down upon me!” (Fantra)

Oh, god…… he was in a pose similar to a nun’s.

“Therefore, to the me now anything you do is useless. Give it up.” (Fantra)

“……. It’s different. I-“ (Tamaki)

“Tenacious.” (Fantra)

A sword of ice was shot at my feet. I immediately understood that he declared his intentions.

“Leadred can’t move. This slave girl will die, and the hero cannot die while in that ice.” (Fantra)

Fantra snaps his fingers continuously, *Pachi* *Pachi* *Pachin*.

With a sword of ice in his right hand, an ice shield and icy stones appeared to surround him.

“Desperation. You, the weakest of these four, are a trifling matter at most!” (Fantra)

Fantra took one step, and again took another step shortening the gap between us. I match him and retreat.

"…… Now, how many minutes can you survive?" (Fantra)

His words signal the start of the fight.

"Then. To start, here." (Fantra)

The icy stones that were floating in the air were fired simultaneously. It was if rain was pouring.

"Triple Guard" (Tamaki)

I put three layers of ice at intervals to jump from one to the other like stairs. When I reached the last one, where I was on the floor was decimated.

"Strong as usual…..!" (Tamaki)

"Hey! Is it safe to look away from me!?" (Fantra)

"I know, shut up!" (Tamaki)

A second volley of the icy stones were shot. Though I jumped down this time to evade, he didn't overlook it.

"Soora!" (Fantra)

Fantra came to close quarters combat.

I have no way to manipulate my body in the air like Katsuragi can.

Therefore, I can do nothing but confront him head on.

"Freezing Lance" (Tamaki)

I defend against the sword with a spear made of the same thing.

"You were also a user of the same ice magic!" (Fantra)

“I was holding back!” (Tamaki)

Fantra’s body was kicked back from the colliding powers, and lands after a single rotation. I turned my body, and ran with all my strength.

“……..Hmph. Well, it’s fine. You’ll die anyways. I keep you company in a game of tag.” (Fantra)

One-by-one, Fantra fired his icy stones rapidly. At times I used the Threefold Ice Layer to defend, others by rotating the lance centered on my wrist to deflect them. Even then it couldn’t be helped that I was hit by some dead-on.

“Freeze!” (Tamaki)

I aimed at the floor under Fantra’s feet to get him to slip. However, he was able to run unimpeded, with composure as though he wasn’t affected by it at all.

“Oioi, child’s play?” (Fantra)

Fantra lowered his foot on purpose and divided the film of ice. Seeing the situation, I chuckle.

This trap was improvised to camouflage something. Shuri-chan’s wound was frozen.

Shuri is not dead, she has only fainted from the aftereffects of『Demon Killing』. That is how I interpret her falling after being attacked from behind from that guy.

It will be bad if she gets too cold, but it should be no problem if it only for a short time.

I just need to imitate this a bit longer.

If I pour magic into her, Shuri-chan should be able to use healing magic to repair the hole.

Confirming that the wound is safely closed with ice, emergency treatment was completed and I attracted his attention.

I stopped trying to escape.

“Oya? Are we done playing tag?” (Fantra)

“Yes. Because you will be defeated where you stand.” (Tamaki)

“Heh….. That was a merry jest, you.” (Fantra)

Fantra spread out his palms.

“Its fine, try it. I’ll wait for you to cast your magic.” (Fantra)

“Thank you very much for your kindness. As I am weak, I’ll accept your kindness.” (Tamaki)

I threw out an obstructive Freezing Lance. He broke it easily.

“……..I never would have thought, this was your trump card?” (Fantra)

“It was just a jest. Next is the real thing.” (Tamaki)

I placed my hands together in front of me and began the chant.

“Spirits of ice, become that shield that defends me. Threefold Ice Layer.” (Tamaki)

Three layers of shields appear in front of my palms.

“Fu……. Consolidating your defenses? Those three ice layers won’t be able to defend against my attack.” (Fantra)

“I wonder about that? By all means go for it. Or does the strongest ice magician wish to run away in fear?” (Tamaki)

“……. I won’t be fooled by provocation.” (Fantra)

“Oh, unfortunate. Then, how about this? Threefold Ice Layer.” (Tamaki)

Three more shields appear ahead of the others.

“Threefold Ice Layer. Threefold Ice Layer. Threefold Ice Layer. Threefold Ice Layer. Threefold Ice Layer. Threefold Ice Layer. Threefold Ice Layer. Threefold Ice Layer.” (Tamaki)

Thirty shields of ice were prepared. I filled the area between Fantra and I up to its capacity with them.

Already, I’m at the limit of my magic. I feel dizzy. But, I won’t give in.

I pulled my arm in until my hand reached my chest.

“—–Shields aren’t used only in defense.” (Tamaki)

I pushed them out with my other palm in a straight thrust.

The thirty layers of ice crash into Fantra at the same time, pushing him into the wall with great force.

“Gu-……! However, with this level…… Freeze Gun!” (Fantra)

Directly from Fantra’s hand, a bullet of ice was shot at the wall. However, it remained as it only broke the first two layers.

“What!?” (Fantra)

Fantra expressed his astonishment.

The conversation from before was foreshadowing this. I purposely used recognizable provocation. And as he knows the rank of the Threefold Ice Layer, I chanted everything.

I predicted that Fantra would definitely use soul-class magic.

And this was the point. That guy wins with magic of the same class. This fact cannot be changed and is providence of the world. Therefore, Fantra would also use soul-class.

However, he doesn’t know. I have the『Witch of Freezing』special ability.

“Gooooooooooo!” (Tamaki)

The surging group of ice layers nailed Fantra to the wall. Like this, it was crushing him, then movement stopped.

“Oooooh!” (Fantra)

Fantra, just like me, was pushing on the high class layers.

“Ku-…….!” (Tamaki)

“Ha-……!” (Fantra)

We directly opposed each other. The ice layers didn’t budge at all. I exhausted myself earlier.

“Aaaaah!” (Tamaki)

He got his revenge on me. I was thrown at the wall, and I feebly fell down.

However, I overflowed with satisfaction. I saw my wristwatch. As expected, the target time was reached.

With this, I fulfilled my role.

“That was a good plan. You put me into a bitter situation.” (Fantra)

Fantra drew close to Katsuragi who was still covered in ice.

“But you and the other girl were the highlights. This guy was a letdown. It would have been impossible anyway, to become the hero of a demon.” (Fantra)

“….. Is that so? Even though those two got along fine. Hey…… for example, they don’t know when to give up.” (Tamaki)

“That isn’t persuasive even when said in this situation.” (Fantra)

Fantra’s ice poked Katsuragi. He completely feels as though he has already won.

“Though its fine to leave it as it is… I must reward you. I will kill this fellow in your presence. Freezing Lance.” (Fantra)

“Eh……? You’ll do what? You know he’ll revive when killed right?” (Tamaki)

“I am aware. There is also a time lag.” (Fantra)

“S-stop! Don’t kill him! It isn’t needed anymore! Don’t hurt him!” (Tamaki)

When I give that sorrowful cry, Fantra looks pleased.

“That’s good. That expression. That excites me the most. I want to see—– what you look like when he is killed!” (Fantra)

Fantra aimed and drove the spear at Katsuragi's head in the ice.

"……. Huh……..?" (Fantra)

——The tip was caught and stopped.

By what? A hand.

Who's? A certain person's.

It was stopped by a hand that was thrust out from the ice crystal.

"H-how!? My ice, how!?" (Fantra)

Fantra retreated trembling.

It was inevitable.

Because the hand belonged to the boy who was confined until now.

The cracks extended from the broken part like a branch. The sound of the ice's destruction acted as a countdown.

And then, it shattered completely.

"Ah…….. Ah……..!" (Fantra)

Fantra looked dumbfounded, standing where he was with the spear pointing at him.

The boy who completed his revival grabbed that person's face.

It was not possible for him to hide the blood thirst seeping from his body.

"—–Yo, Fantra. I came back from hell to kill you personally." (Daichi)

Katsuragi Daichi put on a devilish smirk, and said so.

Story 2 - Last - 『*Best Friend*』

“How… How!? How are you alive!?” (Fantra)

“……. This corpse, it’s noisy.” (Daichi)

He strengthened the force in his hand. You could hear the dull sound of bones breaking.

“Aaaaaah!!” (Fantra)

“I told you to be quiet!” (Daichi)

He slammed Fantra into the floor with Iron Claw.

“Gaha-…..!?” (Fantra)

Fantra became unable to breathe after the nasty blow to his chest. Even in this situation he was thinking of resisting, and you could see him trying to put his finger and thumb together so I stepped on them.

Fantra gave off a splendid scream of agony.

“Such a bad finger….. Perhaps I should separate it from you?” (Daichi)

He stomped on the fingers of Fantra’s right hand with his heel and broke them. He pulled his left thumb in the direction it doesn’t bend and it folded. A white bone from the second joint became exposed.

“Uoaua!?” (Fantra)

Again, he said something inaudible. Ending up like this was his fault.

I made out the shape of Shuri when I awoke. Tamaki collapsed. Leadred was restrained.

All three were still alive.

Fantra writhed in agony with his hand clutched near his stomach.

“Wind Cut” (Daichi)

Wind Slice was for long distances. This was meant for short distance. Since the striking range was lowered, the power increased by several steps.

The blade of wind immediately caused blood to mercilessly gush out. Blood splattered around.

“P-please… stop.” (Fantra)

He began to beg for his life. Naturally, my hand wasn’t swayed.

I will kill this guy only after I punish him.

“Earth Chain Binding” (Daichi)

Soil sprouts from the ground and binds him down in the shape of the ‘大’ kanji. This chain changed shape and grew thorns.

The thorns naturally dug into his skin when tightening.

“————Ah!?” (Fantra)

“You are someone who often shouts….. Do you not want your mouth? Incidentally, I could reduce the size of your nose as well…. How about it?” (Daichi)

“————! ————-!?” (Fantra)

“Wind Slice” (Daichi)

He becomes almost mute.

It became almost impossible for Fantra to breathe.

He began to froth at the mouth, and struggle with rage. His eyes became hollow, and then fainted.

Such a thing isn’t permitted.

“Water Ball” (Daichi)

The consciousness that he lost was forcibly returned. Cold water soaked his wounds, and Fantra began moving again.

However, moving dampened the pain.

Only pure suffering was allowed.

“Well…. Though this is insufficient….. Leadred and Shuri must be treated. Therefore, I’ll end it with the next one. Your time is over.” (Daichi)

“……” (Fantra)

Fantra was no longer able to speak. He didn’t say anything.

Red specks covered my skin. His face changed to that of someone staring death in the face.

When I was convinced that he completely lost his intention to resist, I addressed the person of merit—The Shield.

“Tamaki!” (Daichi)

“W-what? Ah, was my final performance good? I have some talent in it…..” (Tamaki)

“Ah, I’m sure you could be an actress.” (Daichi)

When I addressed her with a jest, she sent back a quizzical look.

“…… You, are you really Katsuragi? The one I know isn’t capable of smiling like that…..” (Tamaki)

“Knock it off, Shield.” (Daichi)

“Ah, it’s the usual Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki laughed like a child whose prank succeeded.

What should I do as retribution… No, now isn’t the time for that. I need to deal with this bastard.

However, I’ve already done this before.

“Tamaki. I must congratulate you.” (Daichi)

Tamaki was unable to respond to my unforeseen remark.

“Eh, why? Isn’t it fine if Katsuragi does it? The crystal has been used up, so it should be fine since he can’t revive anymore.” (Tamaki)

As Tamaki said, the crystals in the room that were shining lost their sparkle.

“Idiot. Wouldn’t it be good for you to use the magic crystals yourself? First, I think there is a natural crystal.” (Daichi)

“… Ah, it was also like that huh….” (Tamaki)

Tamaki clapped her hands together with a *Pon*.

“Huh? Then, if he’s killed he’ll revive….” (Tamaki)

“You don’t have to worry. Because I’ve talked with someone.” (Daichi)

“Talked….? With who?” (Tamaki)

“A dear, dear person.” (Daichi)

Not to me, but to this guy…….

Tamaki’s head tilted to the side, but I can’t tell her. At least not while Fantra can gear it.

“Apart from that, you were the leading person today. You unexpectedly held out, Tamaki. Therefore, you kill him.” (Daichi)

“Well, if Katsuragi insists… I won’t hesitate.” (Tamaki)

Using my shoulder to help Tamaki with a『It can’t be helped』, it wasn’t bad and I smiled.

“Triple Guard” (Tamaki)

Tamaki made layers of ice in the air over Fantra, putting his life in a precarious state.

“Crush!!” (Tamaki)

Her arm was extended and she drew an arc in the air with her finger, and it began to lower.

The snow-like shield crushed his existence.

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Just as in【Rigal's Den】there was a room with a transportation magic formation, so I began explaining the strategy I came up with a little while ago when I revived.

It's not a good idea to return the long way this time, as we were already worn out. The three other than me were exhausted.

"However, I need to hear what happened. Since my consciousness faded in and out, I don't understand what went on." (Leadred)

Untying herself from the chains, Leadred cast a small fireball to warm the surroundings and her body that had grown cold. So that she wouldn't catch a cold, I passed her my robe.

"Because of my incompetence I fell… I'm sorry. I didn't understand." (Shuri)

Surrounding my neck with her arms, Shuri entrusted her weight to my back and said so apologetically. After suddenly waking up, she clung to and depended on me.

Well, as a man it is expected that I would enjoy this amazing thing right? With those touching my back… My reasoning unraveled.

After killing Fantra, I rescued these two safely. Shuri's chest was pierced through and I was carrying her on my back, though Leadred showed some modesty with difficulty and volunteered to walk.

"Not being able to die when confined in ice is common sense. And yet, the hero made use of『Revenge of the Resented』and came back…." (Leadred)

"Ah, that. I used the effects of『Deadly Poison』." (Daichi)

““Deadly Poison?”” (Leadred, Shuri)

“Yes! The special condition『Deadly Poison』.” (Tamaki)

Shuri and Leadred asked in unison. I didn’t answer it though, Tamaki did.

“When I was looking through Katsuragi’s pouch for various things when he was affected by Fantra’s emperor-class magic. At that time he had something. I saw the Yanu Leaf and ——–.” (Tamaki)

After looking at the complexion of her close friend, Tamaki continued.

“If you ingest an excessive amount of the Yanu Leaf, you gain the special condition『Deadly Poison』. Every minute it will drain 100 stamina. In addition, if your stamina becomes zero during this effect, the person dies. In other words, it doesn’t matter if they are confined in ice.” (Tamaki)

“I see….. Though, when did he it? I didn’t see such a gesture…” (Leadred)

“When I kissed Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki announced it as though it was nothing.

“I tore and held the Yanu Leaf in my mouth. I pretended to kill Katsuragi so that he could eat it. Therefore—-“ (Tamaki)

Tamaki gently brushed her close friend’s hair.

“……. Katsuragi didn’t throw away Shuri-chan, so you can stop acting now you know?” (Tamaki)

Her voice was very gentle, and had the power to make Shuri cry.

Shuri didn’t expect that she was seen through and her eyes darted from place to place, flustered.

“W-was I seen through?” (Shuri)

“Obviously. You’re my best friend.” (Tamaki)

“Just now…..Truly?” (Shuri)

“It’s the truth.” (Tamaki)

“…… B-but, still.” (Shuri)

“Ah, enough! If you’re uneasy just carry on as you have been! It’s so nice that you have been whispered word of love. We annoying insects will run away!” (Tamaki)

Trying to cheer her up, Tamaki clapped Shuri on the back.

“Riajuu explosion! Leadred-san, let’s go!” (Tamaki) [TL: English doesn’t have a word for Riajuu so… it means ‘person who is fulfilled in life’.]

Tamaki took Leadred’s hand and proceeded to run off into the transferroom.

We are left alone.

Our glances naturally cross.

There is no one near us.

What Tamaki meant by doing that, what she expected to happen when she left, I understood.

“…… Katsuragi-kun…….. Do you like me?” (Shuri)

“Of course. Shuri, I love you more than anyone.” (Daichi)

In that case, I———.

After delaying for a few minutes, we joined them at the transfer magic formation. The area is filled with light, and only the last word needs to be said now.

"… Incidentally, it seems that we weren't able to make a new companion." (Shuri)

The original reason we came to this dungeon was remembered and said by Shuri who had regained her energy.

"There was no other way. Besides we wouldn't want a guy like that as a companion. It doesn't matter though, because I was able to obtain some good information." (Daichi)

"What information? The next dungeon?" (Shuri)

"Well, something like that. Let's go collect two allies." (Daichi)

"Hee. Are they… more demons?" (Shuri)

"It'll be fun to meet them. Then….. Shall we go?" (Daichi)

I look around for confirmations. Leadred shrugs, Shuri grasps my hand, and Tamaki watches with warm expression.

Everybody gave their acknowledgement through various reactions.

"3, 2, 1—-" (Daichi)

""""Transfer!!""""" (Daichi, Leadred, Shuri, Tamaki)

We invoked the magic formation.

It flew up like a bright yellow sunflower and wraps around us, we were moved and hit by strong sunlight.

We returned from the【Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep】.

Story 2 - Another 1 - 『Demon Goddess』

After Katsuragi Daichi's group left, Fantra Angas was in the room, wrapped in silence.

He was pinned under a layer of ice, dead. However, he was the king of the undead.

He was able to revive himself using his magic. The restoration of his tattered body just completed.

Flinging away the heavy layer of ice, he began moving towards the transfer magic formation that Daichi's group used with a look of rage.

"I'll kill you……! This time I'll kill you…!" (Fantra)

Fantra was born and raised pampered. He excelled in magic ability, and there was practically no one that could match him. He was particularly skilled in ice magic, and was considered the strongest in it.

Due to that, he held a large amount of pride and thought it impossible to lose to someone with less power than himself. One by one he would destroy the minds of talented magicians that showed promise.

Because of his nature he was banished by his country at a young age, and was attacked by a large number of demons in the frontier and killed.

Messiah commanded the demon army and chose to save him.

She recognized Fantra's talent.

Fantra expressed his gratitude towards Messiah for giving him a second life, respecting her, and falling in love with her. It was unrelated that the one who killed him was her subordinate.

Dignified, with an upright back. Sophisticated mannerisms with no wasted movements. Beautiful black eyes like obsidian. Bare legs bewitchingly peeking out from her dress.

This was the impression Fantra had of Messiah.

—-Now, a girl whose appearance that was the opposite of that appeared before Fantra.

"….. Who are you, you bastard?" (Fantra)

Fantra sent the girl a suspicious glare. There was no way a young girl would make it to the underground of a dungeon like this alone.

As such he guessed that she was not an ordinary person, and made it so that he could use magic at any moment. If the sound from his finger rang out, it was his win.

Fantra had the special ability『Chant Substitution』.

It allowed him to replace the『Chanting Portion』with an『Action』to invoke the ability.

This power was given to him after being revived by the woman he fell in love with. It was proof of her love for him, and became his priceless treasure.

He used it on his opponents. He violated them with this power.

However, he was unable to use it on her.

Because he heard the girl's voice.

"—You forgot who I am, Fantra?" (—)

Just a few words.

However, Fantra was unable mistake in that crystal clear voice. He would never forget it.

The voice of his dear, dear goddess.

He immediately kneeled on one knee, hanging his head down. Also, he began shedding tears. He was reunited with his master.

"You noticed at last." (Messiah)

"This Fantra Angas' actions are inexcusable! My conduct towards you was truly impolite… I shall accept any punishment!" (Fantra)

"There is no such need to humble yourself. It was because I came at my own convenience to see your face after such a long time." (Messiah)

Fantra's heart quivered upon hearing her words.

He wanted to raise his head so that the great goddess may see his face.

He wished to do this.

"So, will you raise your face? I wish to burn you into my memory." (Messiah)

He relished every word and thoroughly reflected on each before letting them go.

He counted himself a very fortunate person. He didn't care about Daichi's group.

"That is fine with me… With pleasure." (Fantra)

Fantra raised his head that had been lowered when as he said this.

He expected to see his dear woman's face. However, Fantra's vision was blocked by her hand on his face.

"Cremation Execution." (Messiah)

One of the god-class magics that rule in this world, 『Cremation Execution』.

Eating the existence of what it burns, the fire would never extinguish. Even if you doused the flame with water or exposed it to a strong gust, as the name suggests with 『Cremation』, the hellfire would continue to burn single-mindedly until it is finished.

"Aaaaaaaah!?" (Fantra)

Not simply their body, but their entire existence would burn.

First, every memory. Next, the basis of existence, their soul. In the end it leaves an empty vessel.

In accordance with that, all of Fantra's memories began to burn from beginning to end.

Past grudges, as well as his desire for Messiah.

Before long Fantra stopped his grief-ridden shouts. He couldn't remember.

The sense of pain. Was it good when it hurt? How do you react? Even emotions began being lost.

『Why was I thrown away?』

『Why are you looking at me with those eyes?』

『Even though I am devoted to and love you, why?』

Even with that question, he was unable to ask in front of his God's absurd strength.

"Ah……. Ueh……" (Fantra)

Unable to speak any words, the concept known as Fantra Angas became dust, and vanished from this world.

"…… Deletion completed. I fulfilled my promise, Hero-sama." (Messiah)

She began to recall.

Not long ago, the boy who fought against Fantra died and came to see her.

After dying nine times with a body she had grown accustomed to, he came to the world where she exists.

However, it was premature.

He was killed as usual, though his soul was planned to be sent back, he performed an action for the first time.

He prostrated himself.

『You can kill me as many times as you like, I don't care. But please kill that undead guy.』

“——Still, to ask something like that. You’ve already noticed who I am, haven’t you…” (Messiah)

She unintentionally let out a laugh while recalling it.

“Still, I didn’t make a mistake in choosing him……” (Messiah)

She placed both of her hands over her throbbing heart.

A gentle heart that contrasted with his cruel mind.

Ah…… I want to meet you again. Together we’ll destroy humanity, and dawn the recovery of this world…

“This was a service, Hero-sama.” (Messiah)

By erasing Fantra’s existence, his ability returned to her hand so that she may grant it to the girls that supported him.

I want to help him when I can, but that annoying goddess’ power won’t stop getting in the way so I can only grant one ability.

Though I am concerned, I told him where to go next, where there are two people who will assist him.

That guy and girl won’t imitate Fantra, so be relieved. They are some of my remaining subordinates, pure demons. Different from this deadbeat.

In her mind, she cursed the subordinate she killed.

“Besides, it seems like the girls at his side are crazy about him…” (Messiah)

If they join that child, it will only be a matter of time until all of my excellent subordinates are liberated.

I can see it, when I close my eyes I can see the gallant figure of a young man leading an army to fight against the human race.

This is the near future, it will surely become reality.

Ah……

“Quickly…… Come to me, Daichi….” (Messiah)

Speaking out such a desire, the demon goddess—Messiah vanished from this place.

Story 2 - Another 2 - 『*Yuji-san*』

"……-sama! ……-sama!" (—)

…… I could hear someone's voice.

After being shook a few times, the fog in my head finally cleared up.

"…… Where… am I…?" (—)

Bright sunlight assaulted my eyes. Dazed, I sat up.

"Ah! Hero-sama! You woke up!" (—)

There was a man that reacted loudly. It was Rin Wade, the guard who was assigned to escort Yuji-san and the rest of us.

He looked different. From his expression, he looked to be in a hurry. I thought that he didn't talk much during the journey because he was focused on our surroundings and grew accustomed to that but… it seems I was off.

"Yes… what's wrong? Why are you panicking?" (Hayase)

"Ah, no… I'm fine, really." (Rin)

Rin-san seemed to fumble over his words.

At last I regained my senses and began to look around the vicinity.

Glancing around… no one was there. Tamaki-san, Umahara-kun, as well as Minamoto-san. Even Yuji-san…

It was strange that I would be outside without everyone else. Those people aren't so horrible that they would leave a person behind.

… I don't know about Umahara-kun and Manamoto-san though.

I thought that because I've seen them bully a certain boy from the class.

At the drop of a hat, they used violence to indiscriminately bully a classmate that wasn't guilty of anything. They would give petty reasons like『I don't like him』.

To be honest, I never watched it happen. After all, from my point of view they were just trying to make themselves feel better by placing someone below them.

For the sake of confirming their dominance they abused another human, just wanting to belittle them.

In the end he was used as a decoy in the dungeon. However, I was also to blame for that.

It's not like I couldn't have done something. It was the same at school too.

At that time, if only I said something like『Stop it』. However, I was afraid that I would become the target of their bullying.

I regretted that now. If I could meet him again, even if he wouldn't understand…. I want to apologize to him. Though it may be too convenient, I felt that we all needed to do it.

"… Hero-sama? Are you unwell?" (Rin)

"Ah, no. I was just thinking a little…" (Hayase)

While I was lost in thought Rin-san's voice pulled me back to reality.

… Let's think back.

We dove into the【Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep】.

However, Umahara-kun and Minamoto-san separated from us, and Yuji-san ran after them.

Tamaki and I were waiting on standby, when Yuji-san returned covered in scratches. Then, I fainted…

… That's right. My neck was hit hard by someone. Yuji-san wouldn't do something like that.

Then, I must have been attacked by some demon or thief that was aiming at adventurers like us.

In other words… Yuji-san and the others are in danger!

My body moved of its own accord.

"Hero-sama! Please calm down!" (Rin)

Rin-san stopped me by holding my arms behind me.

"Please let me go! I need to hurry and help them!" (Hayase)

"With your lack of combat capabilities, even if you went in alone nothing could be done." (Rin)

"That's…" (Hayase)

A sensitive topic was struck and I stopped resisting. My『Grand Library』was not a special ability meant for fighting.

Though it proves its worth when supporting a companion.

My statuses aren't that high. That's why we came to this evil dungeon and raise our level.

"T-then, what should we do? Leave them alone?" (Hayase)

I don't want to abandon them. I will never again do something like that.

Rin-san answered my question immediately.

"Hero-sama. I have a message from Yuji-san." (Rin)

"From… Yuji-san?" (Hayase)

"Yes. After bringing you here after you fainted, I went back into the dungeon to help the others come out. When I did so, Hero-sama reported that he wanted you to do something." (Rin)

"W-what is it? What did he say?" (Hayase)

"He wanted me to tell you to return to the royal palace and request aid. That only Fuuko could do this. That's his message. Because of that we should leave at once." (Rin)

"Let's go! To return to the royal palace!" (Hayase)

I talked over Rin-san's words.

Yuji-san said it. The royal palace might send backup when we return. That it was something only I can do.

Only… Fuuko…

My enthusiasm was suddenly interrupted.

My first name was used by someone I like… This feeling…

“Hero-sama? Your face is red… Are you hot?” (Rin)

“Ah, n-no! No! A-anyway, let’s leave soon! Let’s not waste any time!” (Hayase)

“Yes, certainly!” (Rin)

We got on the horse and Rin-san guided it forward.

Please wait, everyone…!

I will definitely get help!

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After several hours, I had safely returned to the royal palace and told them what happened. Afterwords, when returning to my assigned room because I was tired, I ran into three women in the hallway.

All three were part of Minamoto-san’s group. They were, from the right, Inoma-san, Niijima-san, and Horitani-san.

Each of them had a piercing, which broke school regulations and was not good student behavior.

“Hayase. We heard, you….” (Horitani)

“W-what?” (Hayase)

“Playing dumb!? We know you ran away from Kureha’s group without helping!” (Horitani) [TN: Kureha was Minamoto’s given name]

“Eh!?” (Hayase)

I was unable to conceal my astonishment from Horitani's words. Why, why would she think that?

"Y-you're wrong! That isn't what happened! There was a monster house, and I would have just been a hindrance!" (Hayase)

"Monster house!? You, why did they go somewhere that dangerous!?" (Horitani)

"We tried to stop them! B-but Minamoto-san and Umahara-kun went in anyways." (Hayase)

"I won't believe that Kureha would do something like that!" (Horitani)

She swept her palm down and smacked my cheek.

"Anyways, you just unreasonably tried to gain praise! Then abandoned them like we did Katsuragi!" (Horitani)

"T-that's not it! Listen to me!" (Hayase)

"You're annoying! Shut up!" (Horitani)

"A-!?" (Hayase)

I received a large impact to my stomach. Horitani-san's fist stuck into me.

I crouched down, unaccustomed to the pain. Then, I was hit with a kick to the side and showered with verbal abuse.

"This murderer!" (Horitani)

"Hiii-!?" (Hayase)

I defended my head with my arms, but I couldn't endure this unreasonable violence.

How long do I have to experience this pain? How much suffering do I need to endure?

Tears overflowed. Why did this sort of thing happen? Did I make a mistake somewhere?

"… Tch! Come on, we're done! We'll tell everyone about her!" (Horitani)

Satisfied that I was knocked down, the three of them walked down the hallway.

I looked outside and saw that it was nighttime. I should've gone to the dining room. That would've been normal for me, but no.

I leaned against the wall.

"Why… Why…!" (Hayase)

My tears stopped streaming. Instead, they were replaced with frustration and worthlessness.

I am powerless.

Because I am weak I am no good. Because I am weak…

"Starting tomorrow… what will I do?" (Hayase)

Horitani-san said that she would tell everyone. Then, they will label me as a 『murderer』, targeting me with violence as well.

I know. Because, there was an example of this in the past. For our convenience. I will receive a similar treatment.

To be stared at like that… to be treated painfully like that…

"…… I'll just die." (Hayase)

My hands rose to my neck. If I shot magic here, it would be instant death.

At that moment, Yuji-san's face came to my mind. He was the first to treat me kindly, a man that recognized my existence.

He encouraged me so much, pushing me to persevere.

"…… No." (Hayase)

I don't want to betray his words, and put down my hand.

"…… What should I do, Yuji-san……" (Hayase)

The hallway was empty.

Nevertheless, a voice answered the question.

『Do you want power?』

"……Eh?" (Hayase)

I look around, and see no one. However, the voice comes again.

『Sorry. I will not show you myself. I will not tell you my identity.』(—)

"Eh? Eh?" (Hayase)

『Calm down. My words are heading to you directly, using magic. So, the answer to my question?』(—)

"Ah, y-yes…" (Hayase)

『Good, obedience is good. Then, first of all, I will let you know—your Yuji-san is alive』(—)

“———–!? R-really!?” (Hayase)

『Quiet down.』(—)

“Y-yes. I’m sorry.” (Hayase)

I bowed my head out of habit though there was no one.

But, that didn’t matter.

Yuji-san was alive… That filled my mind.

『Tamaki Yuina also lives. However, the other two died in an unexpected accident. As he was unable to defend them, the man who let them die will be punished.』 (—)

“T-that’s…! But, those two ignored us and went anyways!” (Hayase)

『The world is cruel. That would be taken as an excuse. And so, those two are going to the next dungeon to recruit companions. Here is my question for you.』(—)

“A question… is it?” (Hayase)

『Yes. If you become their companion, do you swear to support him?』(—)

That was a silly question. I can become his strength. Next to him I can support him.

Something like that would make me happy.

“I swear it. I will support Yuji-san through any pain.” (Hayase)

『——That's what I expected, child.』(—)

The voice seemed to laugh in my mind.

『Then, I will give you power.』(—)

"P-power?" (Hayase)

『Yes. I will make sure later. I wish for you to help him with that power. He wants you.』(—)

"H-he wants… me…" (Hayase)

『They are heading towards a dungeon named【Scorching Execution Ground】. You will leave early tomorrow so that you won't be found, and go there. Understand?』(—)

"Yes. Absolutely… I will go to Yuji-san…" (Hayase)

When I said so, she made a sound like a laugh and ended the conversation. The voice was not there anymore.

So then, there was only one thing I can do. The pain naturally lessened. Was it because my feelings were improved?

Though I don't know why, Yuji-san wants me. I am wanted.

So, I will respond.

"Yuji-san…" (Hayase)

Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san, Yuji-san……

My mind is dyed with his color.

I enter my room, and begin preparing to travel.

Forsaken hero

- Story 3 -

Dungeon – Scorching Execution Ground

Chapter 1 - 『*Chance*』

“Let’s buy weapons!” (Tamaki)

That was the first thing she said. Tamaki was in a cheerful mood, so she proposed it.

I did break my sword and Shuri’s dagger was chipped so it was a good idea.

As amateurs using them so roughly in combat, it was to be expected.

“This is a good time to buy weapons~! Don’t you agree?” (Tamaki)

“What’s that? Even though you wouldn’t listen to me.” (Shuri)

“I don’t want to recognize the meek and obedient Yui-chan’s opinions, staring at him with those warm dere eyes.” (Tamaki)

“… Hmph, is that so…” (Shuri)

Their expressions relaxed into grins as they turned towards me.

These two; their behavior towards each other reverted to close friends after the battle against Fantra and the awkward mood lessened considerably.

Because of that my chances to talk with Shuri decreased though.

I can profit from Shuri by purposely letting these two shop by themselves.

Perhaps, tonight… if Shuri remembers the promise… it will be that kind of day. If I preserved this good mood, would it be selfish to receive it tonight?

“It’s not like that wasn’t the plan. Well, we have money from capturing the dungeon, so go buy something. Besides… look.” (Daichi)

I quickly gestured at the red horned demon behind me with my thumb. Leadred’s eyes blazed with childlike innocence.

Her reaction showed how much she loved fighting. She wanted to look at weapons, so there was no helping that she would go to look at them.

Seeing her appearance, Tamaki agreed. Today’s plan was decided.

“It’s settled, then. I’ll go around with Shuri-chan, and Katsuragi enjoy time with Leadred.” (Tamaki)

“Objection!” (Daichi)

Emphasizing it, I objected.

“Why are you the one making decisions? Shuri will always go with me.” (Daichi)

I pulled Shuri’s hand and embraced her.

“… Ah. Daichi-sama…” (Shuri)

Seeing her expression, my determination was reaffirmed. I won’t hand her over today. Normally I would let her but definitely not today!

“Ah-! I thought you’d say that! I admit that Shuri-chan likes you, but this is different!” (Tamaki)

“Are you Shuri’s mother!? I like Shuri. Shuri likes me. You don’t need a reason for a couple to go around town together.” (Daichi)

“I also want to slowly spend time alone with my close friend!” (Tamaki)

“Therefore, saying something like that I also-“ (Daichi)

“On the way back here, every day, who were the ones being flirty from morning to noon to night~? Making us endure seeing that! I almost vomited sugar!” (Tamaki)

Leadred nodded her head with a [Un Un]. Remembering that, Shuri smiled while embarrassed.

Somehow or another I didn’t have any allies in this. Nothing could be done but to use my last resort.

“That’s fine, Tamaki. I’ll use『Absolute Command』to teach you a lesson of my greatness.” (Daichi)

“That’s cheating! Do you have no pride as a man!?” (Tamaki)

We glared at each other. Feeling the situation was escalate, I felt a bloodcurdling presence like cold water was splashed on my head from in front of me.

Wanting to buy weapons, Leadred who had been made to wait started urging us with her glance.

“… Will you stop fighting?” (Leadred)

The pressure from Leadred’s presence caused Tamaki’s face to turn blue.

“… That’s so. However, what will we do? I don’t want to separate from Shuri.” (Daichi)

“I also don’t want to.” (Tamaki)

“U-um, you two… we could decide it with rock paper scissors? Whoever comes out with the same result as another is a pair? How about it?” (Shuri)

As we were beginning to repeat the same thing again, Shuri proposed a compromise.

I see. It's impossible to cheat, and was entirely left to luck. It was impossible to complain at any result.

"I'm fine with that." (Tamaki)

"I also don't mind. Leadred?" (Daichi)

"You want me to join the rock paper scissors? Well, I'll go with the extra person because I don't understand it. Or rather, as long as I can look at the weapons anything is fine." (Leadred)

"If that's the case, it's fine." (Daichi)

Shuri's fluttering hand had already been taken by Tamaki, whose face was brimming with confidence.

Predictions wouldn't matter. The one to win the date with Shuri will definitely be me!

"Alright, let's start! Rock, paper!" (Daichi)

""""Scissors!!"""" (Daichi, Shuri, Tamaki)

Each of us threw out our hands that would decide our fates.

◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆

Now, we were in an industrial blacksmithing area called Russell. It was in the opposite direction of the Royal Palace from the【Labyrinth of the Sleeping Trance】.

However, we were far away. It was a five day's walk. Without even a village from there to here, we were stuck with just portable rations and water summoned by magic, but with our experience from【Rigal's Den】 we didn't starve.

On the way back from the labyrinth we encountered a thief boss and took his head, so his followers listened to what we said and carried out baggage as well as hand over all of their money. Never again would they try to do that. After doing something like that, it felt good. Very good.

"T-that way has something that looks like delicious yakitori! The price is fine, buy it!" (—)

It turned out that I was paired with this person…

"Why did I have to pair up with you…" (Daichi)

Muttering that, my feet moved to the stall slowly.

"You said it yourself. It's an unlucky day, unlucky." (—)

The results from the rock paper scissors, paper (Me), paper (Tamaki), scissors (Shuri), had me pair with Tamaki, the worst possible pair from the lots.

Though we both demanded a redo, we saw Shuri smile with eyes that held no laughter and Leadred's glare abandoning us.

Shuri and Leadred went to the left, and Tamaki and I went to the right, with a promise to gather in the central plaza at six o'clock when the evening is over and started after about ten minutes.

Tamaki and I immediately, mutually, complained.

Haa, Tamaki sighed. I feel the same.

“… Anyway, there’s no use in complaining now… hey.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki held out her small white hand. Though I understood her intention, I ignored it.

“… W-what are you doing? Hurry up and take it.” (Tamaki)

“Why?” (Daichi)

“I’m trying to be a substitute for Shuri-chan. Don’t you understand?” (Tamaki)

“… Well… you aren’t suited to be a substitute for Shuri.” (Daichi)

“You’re always so fussy. Listen up, escort me. Why don’t you treat me as Shuri-chan and tomorrow ask her on a date?” Tamaki)

“Eh? It’s fine?” (Daichi)

I wasn’t able to hide my surprise from Tamaki’s unexpected remark.

“Unfortunately, I understand that Shuri-chan’s feelings towards you were not from being compelled. There’s no way that I would be a hindrance.” (Tamaki)

“Wasn’t the obstruction from a bit ago a little cruel?” (Daichi)

When I replied with my justifiable opinion, Tamaki lost her composure and became flustered.

“T-that’s… That’s because if Katsuragi doesn’t rehearse it beforehand, he’d make a blunder. If that happened Shuri-chan’s mood would turn to the worst, and that’s no good. After all, Katsuragi has never had a girlfriend.” (Tamaki)

“No, I’ve had one.” (Daichi)

“From a manga probably.” (Tamaki)

“… … …” (Daichi)

I had no words to respond with.

“Because I am experienced in these things.” (Tamaki)

“… Wasn’t that your first kiss?” (Daichi)

“Fue-!?” (Tamaki)

Tamaki blushed immediately, panicking timidly. This person has been hectic for a while now.

“D-don’t say that! That sort of thing wasn’t a kiss! I mean, Katsuragi! Won’t you take responsibility? You took my first kiss.” (Tamaki)

“The imperfect society of this world approves of polygamy.” (Daichi)

“… Eh? Ah, you’ll take responsibility…?” (Tamaki)

“Yeah, Shuri will be happy if you are there.” (Daichi)

Though from the beginning I never planned to part with someone I made into a slave. Unlike Rin Wade’s ordinary level whose level would never surpass mine, a hero like Tamaki will someday become resistant to Absolute Command.

At that time, it would be more convenient for her to be close to me.

… Well, I wonder if it will be okay if it’s this person, I locked this feeling away inside my chest.

“I-is that so… You’re taking responsibility… t-then, I can feel at ease, yeah.” (Tamaki) [TN: Lit. ‘yeah’ = ‘un’]

Why does Tamaki seem to be so glad from that? It seems I’ll have to rethink this girl…

Or I might not be able to enjoy time with Shuri.

“Hey, hey, let’s hurry and go to that arms shop? There are good quality weapons inside, they are cheap!” (Tamaki)

“Ah, oi!” (Daichi)

Tamaki grabbed my right hand and advanced ahead, pushing a few people out of the way. Her hair waved in the wind, and I saw her laughing face break into a smile from behind.

“Come to think of it, Katsuragi uses a one handed sword right?” (Tamaki)

“That’s right… why?” (Daichi)

“Here, you aren’t carrying a shield.” (Tamaki)

“Hahaha. Don’t make me laugh, Tamaki.” (Daichi) [TN: ‘Tamaki’ read as ‘Shield’]

“Fine, don’t move, I’m going to fix your face back to your ugly one.” (Tamaki)

Our conversation carried on in this beautiful style while we were choosing our weapons.

I bought a longsword and a dagger, while Tamaki bought one hundred throwing knifes. Taking her style into consideration I didn’t complain.

“Where should we go next? We have plenty time left.” (Daichi)

“Then, shouldn’t we go buy potions and elixirs? When we fought Fantra, we had almost no magic remaining.” (Tamaki)

“… That’s right.” (Daichi)

Lowering my eyelids, I clearly remembered the fierce fighting from the other day. It was a considerably hard fight.

I heard later, Shuri’s magic also almost ran out like Tamaki’s…

To prepare for the worst situation, I learned that it would be good to have a means to commit suicide from the fight against Fantra.

We need to buy a few Yanu leaves to replenish our stock.

“I don’t mind. For those, how about we go to the Adventurer’s Guild?” (Daichi)

“Right… Ah, wasn’t I supposed to be dead? Won’t it be bad to go to the guild?” (Tamaki)

“It shouldn’t be a problem. There are fools everywhere spreading news like 『The Hero that should defeat the Demon King died before fighting with the Demon King』.” (Daichi)

However, that relies on Hayase telling the story to Ginger. However, she will do it. To do me—Yuji-san—a favor.

“Is that so… oh well.” (Tamaki)

“Therefore, it is fine. Hey, let’s go.” (Daichi)

“Roger!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki and I, for different reasons, decided to head to the Adventurer's Guild.

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The Adventurer's Guild is located in front of Russell's central plaza. It tries to distract Russell's guests from the left and right sides from whatever they are doing and go into it.

The left side that Shuri went to is for the wealthy, whereas the right side that we are in is for civilians such as adventurers.

Therefore, this Adventurer's Guild is in the center.

Though are first impressions were that it looked like the last one, it was much larger as we approached. Ignoring the bar, it sold goods required to capture the dungeon, though sales were on the second floor, and quests were given on the first floor's lobby. In addition, it seemed adventurers could book low costing rooms.

However, Russell's Adventurer's Guild had a strange atmosphere. A bloodthirsty atmosphere seemed to waft through the air. Because women's figures were practically never seen there.

Adventurers were at the reception counter as well. Only then did I see the receptionist lady that was like a breath of fresh air in the dirty guild.

"Thank you for waiting. Here is your order of twenty potions and ten elixirs." (Receptionist Lady)

"Thank you very much… Um." (Daichi)

"What is it?" (Receptionist Lady)

"Is something happening, here? The air here seems interesting." (Daichi)

“You don’t know?” (Receptionist Lady)

When I asked the receptionist-sama—her nametag had Miare written on it—her jade green eyes focused on me.

“Yeah, well. I just came to this town.” (Daichi)

“Is that so? … Though it is an embarrassing matter…” (Miare)

Confirming that no one was around us, Miare taught us a secret matter.

“Recently, there’s been a party of people from the capital called Heroes… it hasn’t been easy but they have been advancing floors one by one in the【Scorching Execution Ground】… it seems he brought a female adventurer with him.” (Miare)

Like always, I can’t ignore this. In short I cherry pick the information, jealously, and become soured. However, still.

“… …Hero?” (Daichi)

So. I reacted to this word with hypersensitivity this time. Behind me, Tamaki’s body quivered.

I will not let this chance escape.

“Heh… what’s the name of the hero?” (Daichi)

Miare-san didn’t seem to pay particular attention and told us the name.

The moment I heard the name, both the anger that had been accumulating in my gut for a long time and the resulting laughter at the chance of meeting him welled into my throat.

“It was… Samejima, I think. In addition to Samjima, there was one named Kishima that came… customer? Are you alright?” (Miare)

A mischievous angel, or a devil’s trap?

For me it would be the former, which would make the latter for him.

“Ah, no, I’m sorry. Just a little, I felt in a good mood. I owe a great deal to them.” (Daichi)

A really, really large debt. Tormented, thrown away, killed… one life won’t be enough for him to pay it back.

“Heeeh, really? That’s good then. Being able to meet them again.” (Miare)

“Yeah, really—I’ll finally be able to repay them.” (Daichi)

I naturally had an evil smile at the thought of the future.

Having fun couldn’t be helped. Like a child given a toy he wanted.

I’m looking forward to it.

With his sword in hand, at that time he will be dyed in crimson—.

When Tamaki and I received our items, we hurried towards the central plaza.

What to do? I decided.

On that guy, everything will be for the sake of————revenge.

Chapter 2 - 『Approaching the Distance』

Samejima came to this town. He came. That fact stirred me.

How should I kill him? First of all, I can't go wrong by heading to the dungeon.

Beat him to death, poison him, strangle him, or kill him with my sword. The idea of getting revenge on him played over and over in my head.

However, it seems that due to that my judgement dulled. Though I rushed to the central plaza, it was natural that even though I wanted to tell her, Shuri wasn't there yet.

"… Katsuragi… for a minute there, you were acting strange. Just how much of a grudge to you bear against Samejima… at least hold back your blood thirst while we're in town." (Tamaki)

Catching up to him, Tamaki gave advice. For her to notice I must have been running at a considerable speed.

"… It's not like I don't understand your feelings but… what will you do?" (Tamaki)

"I'll get revenge. For me, and for Shuri who were thrown away and killed." (Daichi)

"It isn't the time for that, yet!" (Tamaki)

Tamaki suddenly brought the clock on her wrist close to me. The long hand was at the twelve, and the hour hand at the five. It was an hour until the promised time.

I glanced around and saw that people were staring at me strangely.

It was obvious that I looked out of place.

"… Ah–, sorry. I seem to have been in a rush for a moment there." (Daichi)

"Rushing is a taboo, carelessness as well. Even then, to kill him without being discovered." (Tamaki)

I thought as Tamaki spoke.

I had dashed out without thinking about anything once I heard that there was a chance at killing him. Strategies as well, same with countermeasures.

Samejima was also a Hero. Furthermore, he was Claria's favorite.

Certainly, Tamaki's level needed to catch up to mine and Shuri's, and possibly Leadred's. [TN: This is worded awkwardly in the raw from what I can tell…]

If we went about this poorly, my head would probably be splattered.

"… Thank you, Tamaki. I've calmed down." (Daichi)

"… It was nothing. I didn't forget how worried we'd be if you died on us." (Tamaki)

"It took courage say that." (Daichi)

"… Well, don't think about it too much." (Tamaki)

Tamaki pinched my cheek with all her strength. It hurt.

"… … What are you doing?" (Daichi)

"I'm making my brother, who's still making an evil face, smile." (Tamaki)
[TN: She uses 'onii-san']

She continued to speak.

"Shuri-chan wants to see Katsuragi's smiling face. Leadred-san too. After all I… so, Katsuragi… I understand that are circumstances I don't know, though a part of me… unexpectedly I eagerly want it as well." (Tamaki)

Tamaki seemed to regret coming along with me. Despite that, she spoke to humbly request something.

"It's okay continue as always. You can't afford to rush like when you killed me… when we come across them, I won't mind it even if you rip them into shreds or fill them with holes. No one would complain, won't be allowed to, nor be able to. I promise. So… isn't it alright to be at ease for a little longer?" (Tamaki)

"… … The preaching of a former bully won't move my heart." (Daichi)

"So bothersome… even though I look like this I've reflected on those things… no, I still haven't finished reflecting." (Tamaki)

Tamaki stopped playing with my cheek and bowed from her waist.

"I am very sorry." (Tamaki)

What she gave was an apology.

"I… was just trying to go along with what other people were doing… no, that would only be an excuse wouldn't it? I don't think you'll forgive what I did.

However, I wanted to let you know how I feel. U-usually I am sarcastic so, umm, please pardon that for a little… Being open in front of Katsuragi… well, it's enjoyable to talk. A-anyhow, I hurt you! I promoted hurting you, I am so sorry!!" (Tamaki)

Once again, Tamaki bowed her head deeply.

… … What do I want from her? What should I think?

I searched every nook of my heart… and couldn't find anything to say, all of the resentment I'd held towards her was gone.

Tamaki might be lying and apologizing for her life, I doubted her.

However, curiously I didn't think she was lying.

The stones that filled my mind with unease fell.

I wasn't thinking, I mean—about things like that.

"… Tamaki." (Daichi)

"… …" (Tamaki)

"Please, raise your head." (Daichi)

"… … Okay." (Tamaki)

Tamaki did as she was told. I caught her off guard and embraced her.
Tamaki lost her balance and leaned toward me.

"… Eh, ah, eh?" (Tamaki)

"Tamaki. It's embarrassing, but will you hear my answer even if it is bad?" (Daichi)

“Ah, y-yes…” (Tamaki)

Tamaki shut her eyes firmly.

She didn’t want to hear it, she was probably afraid.

And so, I said it.

I include her in my revenge.

“I do not forgive you.” (Daichi)

“…–“ (Tamaki)

The sound of her losing her breath reached my ears. Understanding my answer, Tamaki tried to move away. However, I didn’t let her go.

Additionally, I added strength to the hold.

“K-Katsuragi?” (Tamaki)

“I will say it again. I do not forgive you. Therefore, I have the right to get revenge on you for a long time. Do you disagree?” (Daichi)

“… I don’t disagree. To that extent, I will accept any demand.” (Tamaki)

“Then, stay beside me.” (Daichi)

“… … … eh?” (Tamaki)

“Don’t you understand? Are you an idiot? I will punish you. You will respond. Therefore you will need to stay beside me for a lifetime. Though it may be bad luck for you, the spot on my left has a vacancy.

It’s needless to say who is filling the spot on my right.

“Therefore, you will be near me. Forever until I am satisfied.” (Daichi)

I talked rapidly, and told her everything I wanted to say. It’s not because I was embarrassed.

Yeah, it’s different. Thinking that I’ll tell my feelings, it ended up like this. So, now, it isn’t necessary to regret. I don’t need to add to my dark memories…!

I asked to deceive my feelings.

“Are you prepared?” (Daichi)

“… … …” (Tamaki)

Tamaki completely entrusted her delicate body to me, feeling timid, put her hands on my back and answered weakly.

“…Thank you, Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

“…Don’t worry about it. We are equals now. I also killed you.” (Daichi)

“This… reconciliation… is it done?” (Tamaki)

“I said that I haven’t forgiven you.” (Daichi)

“… That’s right. I will stay forever to be forgiven.” (Tamaki)

… What is that supposed to mean? Depending on how I take it I can understand that as a proposal…

… Either way, I don’t care because I’m not letting go of her.

“… Because I’m a persistent, tenacious guy, I am confident that I won’t forgive you for life.” (Daichi)

“… Is that a proposal?” (Tamaki)

“You too, wasn’t that a proposal earlier?” (Daichi)

“… … … Secret.” (Tamaki)

I heard her murmur that under her breath.

“Then, mine is also a secret… Say, shouldn’t we look for a place to stay? … Staying like this for too long is embarrassing.” (Daichi)

“… Oh well. I wonder what Shuri-chan would do if she saw—“ (Tamaki)

Tamaki, who began to move away from me stopped suddenly. Her mouth barely managing to open and close.

Though she didn’t say anything, I roughly understand what she was trying to say.

This doesn’t make me a bad person… no, I’m not doing anything bad.

… Well then, how can I return to normal the mood of the girl behind me? I turned around, still searching for the best idea.

“Katsuragi-kun and Yui-chan…? Shall we… have a little chat? For now, why don’t we look for a room for us three to be alone?” (Shuri)

… … This could be bad.

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We met earlier than planned and chose two double rooms. It’s needless to say why I deliberately did not rent a four-person room.

This time they were more luxurious than common rooms. Although was is a place where you would want to heal by jumping into a soft bed, Tamaki and I were told to sit on the hard floor.

Two hours had already passed. We were running on the third hour.

“Leadred and I learned information about Samejima, so we rushed to meet you two and by no means were we hiding…” (Shuri)

“No, you have it wrong, Shuri-chan. It didn’t mean anything in particular.” (Tamaki)

“Yui-chan? It’s no good to lie. Woman’s intuition is an amazing thing you know?” (Shuri)

“… … … Okay.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki fell silent in the presence of an aura that did not allow talking.

“…Shuri. I want you to hear me out a little. First of all, Shuri is my number one. Please understand that will never change.” (Daichi)

“Yes, I also love Daichi the most.” (Shuri)

“Then-“ (Daichi)

“However, this is different. I have asked many times since earlier “Why was that kind of thing done?”… Yui-chan understands what I mean right?” (Shuri)

“… … … Yeah.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki nodded in resignation. Then, gave me a sidelong glance. Her gaze went back and forth between Shuri and me.

“What’s on your mind?” (Shuri)

“… A-about that, could it be later, with just the two of us…?” (Tamaki)

Tamaki had her head on the floor. Prostrating. She put all of her sincerity into it. She really wanted to be pardoned.

“Yeah, that’s fine. Then, Yui-chan and Leadred-san should go wait over there in that room.” (Shuri)

“T-thank you!” (Tamaki)

Shuri was no demon. With her feelings firmly transmitted to Tamaki, she released her.

… Huh? Then, why wasn’t I released after telling you how I felt, Shuri-chan?

Though, that problem was immediately resolved.

“… Well, Daichi-sama… Please come here.” (Shuri)

Shuri tapped the spot next to her with a *PonPon*.

Following her instructions, I groaned as Shuri placed her head on my lap.

Without changing, she turned and embraced my waist with her arms.

We locked eyes. Shuri diverted her gaze first.

“Ah, Shuri?” (Daichi)

“We are finally alone. With this… we can do it with peace of mind, right, Daichi-sama?” (Shuri)

Shuri guessed my intention. She understood immediately, didn’t she?

Those upturned eyes are sneaky. Though it was unpleasant, my eagerness overflowed.

"… Ah." (Shuri)

Shuri also seemed to notice that part of my body changing. Her ears and cheeks were dyed in a bright red.

"I'm happy. By me… so…" (Shuri)

"… Shuri. At least, endure it until later tonight." (Daichi)

"That's no good. To the extent you cherished Yui-chan, please pour Daichi-sama's love onto me as well." (Shuri)

Shuri's approach was intense as she was jealous of her friend.

Shuri began to take off her usual maid clothes. When she removed her frilly skirt, she began to undo the buttons of her top one by one to tease me.

Before long, her pale pink underwear and white skin were exposed.

"… Daichi-sama…" (Shuri)

Shuri sat comfortably between my knees.

A sweet scent tickled my nose. I saw her nape from the gap in her hair. Unsuitable for her age, her childlike body was before my eyes.

Shuri took my hands and moved them to her breasts.

"…Nn-…" (Shuri)

She let out a weak breath. She was too captivating, the limits of my self-control were instantly passed.

Embracing Shuri's body, I turned around and pushed her down.

Soft lips. A perfectly modeled face like glass that seemed as though it would break from a touch. In her pupils dwelled insecurity and a large expectation.

They seemed to captivate me and draw me in.

"… Be gentle." (Shuri)

Once I heard that… my reasoning could no longer hold out.

I hung over Shuri.

Chapter 3 - 『Acquiring Information』

It was skillfully done for our first time together, though apart from that there was nothing in particular other than going for three rounds. My impressions… I won't talk about much.

However as a brief comment… Shuri was amazing, I guess? She was considerably proactive, and the final round became a scramble for leadership. Though I won by betting my pride as a man.

We went to Leadred's room and began talking about our plans for the future. The topic of discussion was『Do we kill Samejima first?』, not『Do we capture the dungeon first?』.

According to the advice I received from the goddess there seems to be two people who will join me.

Then, capturing the dungeon's priority went up as it would overwhelmingly increase the success rate of getting revenge.

So, we immediately came to a conclusion. We would prioritize capturing the dungeon.

The problem was Samejima's henchmen.

"Assuming that we kill Kijima… what about Sajima…?" (Daichi)

Right, Sajima Nanami. She holds the healer position in Samejima's party and is a character that is nice to everyone, and whose figure is generally popular amongst the year's female students.

Though she seldom became involved with me, she was also in the usual classification as Hayase.

I clearly remember her figure watching me being harshly bullied.

I don't know why such beautiful girls fall in love with Samejima.

"Nanami is… well, I don't want her to be killed." (Tamaki)

Tamaki rose her hand up timidly and gave her opinion.

"Ah–… I understand what you mean but…" (Daichi)

I also don't want to kill Sajima. However, unless we can make her powerless, Samejima's magic and stamina will endlessly be recovered.

Otherwise our situation would get worse and worse. Victory would have to be decided by a one hit kill.

That doesn't mean that I want to indiscriminately murder a classmate though. I only want to kill those who deserve my revenge. I will not overstep that line.

Tamaki understood my silence as denial and it was easy to see that she was depressed.

"It's alright, Tamaki… At least, if Sajima isn't in love with Samejima I'll stay my hand against her…" (Daichi)

"Eh? Daichi-sama, what did you say?" (Shuri)

Shuri who remembered my doubt asked me to repeat my words once more.

"If Sajima isn't in love with Samejima I'll stay my hand against her." (Daichi)

“That’s it. Nanami doesn’t feel anything in particular towards that man.” (Tamaki)

“… … Yes?” (Daichi)

Learning this fact surprised me.

“Sajima isn’t in love with Samejima?” (Daichi)

“Yes. Though she’s often misunderstood because of her attitude… she has goodwill towards everyone.” (Tamaki)

“Huh? What about me?” (Daichi)

“… … Are we not good enough?” (Tamaki)

She evaded the question with a pleasant smile and a *Niko* sound at the end of her sentence.

“Ah, I’m sure. Nanami told me herself. 『I don’t feel anything in particular towards Samejima-kun.』” (Tamaki)

“… … Seriously?” (Daichi)

“Seriously. Here’s the story, Nanami told me that there was someone she liked from before.” (Tamaki) [TN: Before the transfer probably.]

“Ah, I also heard that. But, it seems like she couldn’t meet him.” (Shuri)

“Why?” (Daichi)

“That child, it seems he moved to some distant location… Ah, however, recently, she found a way to meet with him at last.” (Shuri)

“Yes yes. So in conclusion, Nanami is not in love with Samejima.” (Tamaki)

I didn't know… that there was such a situation…

Because the two people who are her best friends agree unanimously, it must be a fact.

Then, it must be that she is with Samejima by chance.

If that's the case, she would come. It is possible to do so by taking advantage of her gentleness.

Therefore, what do I need to do…?

"… Hero-sama, you are shining brightly…" (Leadred)

"He's definitely thinking about something bad." (Tamaki)

"That's Daichi-sama for you." (Shuri)

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The next day. We went out at the same time as we did yesterday to collect supplies so that we wouldn't run into Samejima. We had just left the guild.

"Thank you for your purchase. Well then, today, I will inquire about that person's accommodations." (Miare)

I told you earlier, but it's not like I have requested some night play at a shady establishment.

The one who expressly came to the entrance for me with this standard business phrase with an extra is Miare-san, the guild's receptionist lady from yesterday.

When we went to the guild, she sold me information related to Samejima's group to us.

No, originally we asked for something different, but I requested her to『Sell me the information』.

Though it would take a while to explain the details… it seems Miare-san doesn't think of Samejima as a good hero.

The reason was, yesterday when we went to the guild, Miare-san was the only woman there. Furthermore, I uneventfully talked to her about meeting with the adventurers while concealing that I was a hero.

In fact that reason alone was enough for me to visit her once more, I thought.

I thought that I would have to request it, but since she jumped at me with a crying face the moment I stepped into the guild, it became like this. It made it easy for me and saved me the trouble.

I mean, I would have tried to surmise if it was possible that she was aware of Samejima's true character, even if just 1% of it, but since it came to that, well, life is beyond our control.

Compensation for her request was data on the demons inside【Scorching Execution Ground】. The Adventurer's Guild always has the latest data. Data is updated every January, and Miare-san is in charge of it this month.

Adventurers were attracted by the job description and were paid 5000 col for the easy to acquire information.

Normally, that was OK. Because no new floors were visited.

However, this month was an exception.

Because the heroes visited.

Samejima plunged into one new floor after another, increasing the amount of information she had to collect.

She had also asked the other adventurers, but the unknown floor number was unreasonable. So it was my turn.

She thought that I would also be trying to capture the【Scorching Execution Ground】as an adventurer. That's natural for people that go to the Adventurer's Guild to think.

Since there should be no one who goes there while a low level just to die.

Back to the story at hand.

When I asked her "Will you give me any information related to Samejima?" because she had nothing to lose, she accepted.

The reason was that I could add as much as I liked in postscript. "I want to see him soon" and "Because I'd like to know more about him", I said things like that. Though it wasn't necessary for her to delve deeply into the circumstances of her customers, from the questions it sounded like I was Samejima's girlfriend.

She never thought that I would be gathering information to kill the hero. More or less, that guy was introduced as the hope for humanity.

For me, getting data on demons is a cinch.

I promised absolute secrecy and everything worked out fine. As for the change of location, I'd be troubled if someone saw and became suspicious.

"Well… then. What do we do now?" (Tamaki)

Tamaki and I left the guild with some spare time left. We used the same combination today that we did yesterday, so that we won't be suspected in case we encountered Samejima, so that my identity won't be exposed.

If Shuri came across him, Samejima would not know.

The date is postponed. Staying alive is more important.

"Is there something we need to do? Since we bought weapons and other things yesterday, there is no need to today right?" (Daichi)

As Tamaki said, we have nearly an hour to do something. Miare-san told us the room number so we don't have to go to her for it.

"Then, do we return to the inn?" (Tamaki)

I looked at Tamaki after she said so, it was clear that the tension had lowered.

"… Let's go around town until it's time." (Daichi)

"Y-yeah… Let's go around?" (Tamaki)

Tamaki came entwined her arm with mine and, without change, began to cuddle close to me as we set out.

The envious and jealous stares from those around us were amazing. Looking around this place, I reaffirmed that Tamaki was beautiful.

"Where do you want to go?" (Daichi)

"Let me see… the opposite side we went to yesterday. Honestly I heard this from Shuri-chan, but there are some cute clothes shops there." (Tamaki)

"Then, you want me to buy you clothes at the store…?" (Daichi)

“No, I’ll pay the money. I have the support money from the Royal Palace left over, so I wouldn’t waste what’s left of Katsuragi’s you know? Since we rely on the dungeon for our livelihood.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki beat her chest with a *Don*.

That makes me grateful. Though I want to spoil her…

“No, I’ll pay.” (Daichi)

“Eh, but-“ (Tamaki)

“It’s fine. If it’s about money, entering this dungeon will bring in quite a lot of revenue.” (Daichi)

“Did you hear me? Relying on dungeons for our livelihood is dangerous.” (Tamaki)

“More than anything, I’d like to buy something for you Tamaki. It’s okay to laugh at the worthless pride of a man.” (Daichi)

“… For there to be another surprise attack from Katsuragi…” (Tamaki)

Tamaki averted her eyes from me. I wonder if I did something wrong?

“I see, I understand. But! I also want to buy a present for Katsuragi!” (Tamaki)

“Then, that would make mine have no point…” (Daichi)

“It’s my money to use freely so no complaining!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki became serious. She wouldn’t be stopped. Though I haven’t been with her long, I’ve come to understand this.

“Alright, alright. Feel free to.” (Daichi)

“That way of speaking is irritating… Well, anyway… you were seriously anxious earlier.” (Tamaki)

“What?” (Daichi)

“I haven’t heard, what do you plan to do after your revenge on Samejima?” (Tamaki)

The abrupt question from her was concerned with the future.

Yesterday, I told those kind of things to Tamaki. I will not give up this person and Shuri who are working hard. It’s fine to think that Leadred can live as she wants.

Perhaps, Tamaki is also worried… no, in her case she is just planning ahead… right?

At any rate, doubting Tamaki and the other two is no good.

“Naturally, I’ve already decided but… speaking here is bad. We’ll talk at the inn.” (Daichi)

“… It’s bad for others to hear?” (Tamaki)

“Yeah. Mostly.” (Daichi)

“It can’t be helped then, can it? Well then, let’s do this in a hurry! We don’t have long until the promised time.” (Tamaki)

“Yeah, please show the way.” (Daichi)

“Because I already know where we’re going, leave it to me!” (Tamaki)

If it were the me from a while ago, it would have been unthinkable to waste the time until meeting with Miare-san with Tamaki after that sort of conversation.

Chapter 4 - 『*Reunion*』

“Hm hm hmm” (Tamaki)

Tamaki was humming in a good mood nearby. She had changed from her adventurer clothes into some attire more suited to a young woman.

She put on a thin pink shirt covered by a light blue sweatshirt and some jean shorts.

According to her they were easy to move in. That was the reason Tamaki gave.

“Ah, Yuji-san.” (Miare)

After finishing her work, Miare-san, who was wearing her business suit, called out my alias as I neared the entrance.

“I’m sorry, did you have to wait long?” (Daichi)

“No, I just now arrived.” (Miare)

“That’s good. Please come in, it is troublesome to talk standing around.” (Daichi)

I urged her to enter. She followed into the inn after us.

“… That’s…” (Miare)

Miare-san’s line of sight was on mine and Tamaki’s hands—our ring fingers in particular—and alternated between them.

… I know what you want to say. Tamaki's strategy was working well, and I had to suppress a laugh.

"Is there something wrong?" (Daichi)

"N-no… Ah, that reminds me, to what extent do you want information about the hero Samejima? More or less, as far as I know I am aware of all of what has been gathered." (Miare)

"I don't mind. Is just half of the 5000 col fee fine?" (Daichi)

"Eh-. No, this money is Yuji-san's reward…" (Miare)

"Then, I've received the full amount, and I give this lady half." (Daichi)

"But… is that really ok?" (Miare)

"Yeah. Because I've received the reward. Please enjoy yourself a little with the money. You must be worn out from this month." (Daichi)

It's not that I proposed this to her because I sympathized with her being abused by Samejima.

It's called hush money.

I don't think that she would tell anyone, but this is just in case. After all, it was a verbal promise to give her half.

Only the fact that she received money remained. If people knew about it, her position in the guild would fall. At worst, Miare-san could be kicked from the guild.

Something like that was sure to be noticed by her. It was within her intelligence to understand.

“Thank you for your concern.” (Miare)

“We appreciate your continued support. Now, please. Sit.” (Daichi)

While conversing, we came to the room and I opened the door. Inside, Shuri had prepared drinks. Leadred was in another room on standby.

“Then, excuse me.” (Miare)

“Yes. Shall we begin?” (Daichi)

After Miare-san entered the room, I closed the door and began the confidential exchange.

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In conclusion, the information Miare-san brought was more than expected.

The range and times of Samejima’s actions. What kind of items he bought. The inn he was using. The kinds of magic he was confirmed to use. The predicted path he would take to the dungeon. The roster and dates of female adventurers he took that were not heroes.

She laid out all of the information she had.

“How was it? Was it to your satisfaction?” (Miare)

“Yeah, very much so. How do you have that information?” (Daichi)

When I asked for her true intention, Miare-san’s facial expression took on a distant look.

“I’m the only person in the guild who isn’t captivated by Samejima right? Though, that guy is very persistent, Mainly in bragging and making passes though.” (Miare)

“Ha ha ha…” (Daichi)

I could only laugh dryly. For her, an inhabitant of this world, to denounce him as a hero…

“A braggart like him is no good… if I had to say, I prefer men like Yuji-san… no.” (Miare)

Miare-san ran her hand from my check to my neck, then drifted to my arm, before eventually resting it on my hand.

An obvious invitation. Unlike her appearance before, she had the obscene atmosphere of a prostitute.

“I wonder if I should call you ‘hero of demons’-san?” (Miare)

Those words were enough to give me a shock.

“——!?” (Daichi)

As a conditioned reflex, I took and my sword and brandished it in my hand. I put the shining blade to Miare’s neck.

Nevertheless, she continues with her bewitching smile. She was composed.

“… You, who are you?” (Daichi)

“Oh? You didn’t hear from Messiah-chan?” (Miare)

“… That goddess again…?” (Daichi)

I’m fed up with hearing that familiar name.

I understand that Miare must have a close relationship with her to call her Messiah-chan.

We may have met a troublesome person…

"… Good grief." (Daichi)

"Really? I would have thought she would tell you… Then, I'll introduce myself again." (Miare)

Saying so, she leaned forward in order to emphasize her breasts.

"I am Miare Pharma. One of the six generals, and a succubus. 'Hero of demons'-san, I will be cooperating with you. For the sake of reviving demons.

I called in Leadred who was waiting in the next room to find out if Miare was the real deal.

With her attitude changed, we resumed the discussion.

"You know… if you were an ally from the start why didn't you tell us? It wasn't necessary for us to bother going through the proper procedures…" (Daichi)

"Because, if I said something like that out of nowhere, wouldn't it be suspicious? However, I thought that since I skillfully conveyed something so easy for you to understand, you would have realized." (Miare)

"Uu-" (Daichi)

She hit where it hurt.

As Miare said, if I calmed down to think about it everything happened ideally. Though, even so, I felt uneasy that her scheme was carried out easily.

Yesterday, didn't Tamaki heal what was weighing on my mind, damnit…

I was angry at myself differently than usual.

"… What's wrong? You have on a scary face." (Miare)

Miare poked my cheek with a *TsunTsun*.

"… Cut it out. Continuing from before, what was that about six generals?" (Daichi)

"You really don't know huh, Hero-san. Why did Akina-chan also not tell you? Haven't you two been together for a while…" (Miare)

Miare was preaching to Leadred who was sitting on the bed like she was being punished.

"… Sorry. I left that out because I wasn't interested in the Six Demon Generals. It was fine as long as I could fight someone strong…" (Leadred)

Miare sighed at Leadred's reply. She seemed more like the image of a worldly man than a succubus.

"It hasn't changed, your weakness for fighting… It's fine, I'll teach you. Because of that, Hero-san, call me Miare-sensei." (Miare)

Miare wrapped around the hand I had on top of the table.

"Refused." (Daichi)

"So heartless… people like that aren't popular you know?" (Miare)

"The spots on both of my sides are taken." (Daichi)

"… Hmph." (Miare)

Miare alternated her gaze between Shuri and Tamaki, the two I just mentioned. She seemed to be evaluating them.

“One looks good… though the other one is no good…” (Miare)

The words she murmured disappeared before reaching our ears.

Her serious expression changed completely, and turned into a dubious smile.

“So you know about the Six Demon Generals?” (Miare)

“That’s right. Well, I understand half of it.” (Daichi)

Akina Leadred and Fantra Angas came to mind. These guys were strong and sealed at the bottoms of dungeons.

“I think’s it’s good that Hero-san has thought about it. Messiah-chan nominated the strongest of each of the clans to serve as one of the Six Demon Generals.” (Miare)

She held up five fingers in total, and folded one each time she said someone’s name.

“Akina Leadred of the Oni tribe, Fantra Angas of the Undead tribe, Miare Pharma of the Succubus tribe, Lily Shuraham of the Beastman tribe, and Garfunkel Arthnight of the Dragonman tribe.” (Miare)

“Isn’t there supposed to be six people?” (Daichi)

“In truth there is the also the demi-human tribe but… the hero Terias wiped them out.” (Miare)

“Their entire race?” (Daichi)

That scale was impossible to laugh at. The thought that there was someone like that, it made me shiver. Crazy.

“That’s right, Terias held a monstrous strength… I lost my body fighting him. But, thanks to Messiah-chan I was somehow able to survive. Everyone else was sealed, though.” (Miare)

She looked up at the ceiling, as though yearning for something. She was smiling sadly.

She’s probably remembering those days.

“So, I’ve been hiding my form with magic and living quietly… But, recently, I received some interesting news.” (Miare)

“… That was…” (Daichi)

“Yeah. The hero summoning. Since that day I’ve been scrounging up as much information about that nasty guy for you?” (Miare)

“… Ah, thank you. You’ve really helped me.” (Daichi)

Miare said it like a light joke, though it was easy to see that she must have risked her life to gather it.

A demon repeatedly being in contact with a hero was equal to suicide. Her magic may have been caught one day. Then herself killed.

Under those circumstances she gathered this much information. It’s only natural to thank her.

“You are welcome… Well, guess I’ll go home.” (Miare)

Miare rose from her seat and shouldered her bag as she tried to leave the room.

“What? You can stay longer you know? Don’t you have things to talk about with Leadred?” (Daichi)

“In truth I was also thinking that I’d stay until later tonight to receive Hero-san’s thick liquid… though with that child here I’ll pass. As expected, it’s impossible.” (Miare) [TN: Last sentence has the implication that she wants to even though it is impossible]

Miare looked at Shuri—no, Tamaki and said that.

“Eh, me?” (Tamaki)

“You guys, I think you make a good match. Enjoy yourselves tonight… good luck.” (Miare)

Miare winked and left the room after purposefully adding that last part.

That woman, dropping a bomb like that at the last moment…!

When I looked back, Tamaki’s face was a bright red, Shuri’s face had solidified into a smile, and Leadred was worrying.

… How will I solve this misunderstanding!?

Half out of desperation, the condition to survive was to sleep together tonight, about three hours or so.

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It was early in the morning before the sun had risen.

With the information from Miare, after sleeping shortly with Shuri, we were ready to depart for the dungeon.

Indeed, Shuri was prudent in the last dungeon capture. She was dissatisfied with the method.

“With this are we ready?” (Daichi)

Potions and elixirs were in the pouch. The Yanu leafs were put in. I put the dagger and long sword in their scabbard on my back.

“I am also ready.” (Shuri)

Shuri also seemed to have finished. This time is different from usual, she is wearing a uniform for adventurers. She seems to have bought it yesterday.

She didn’t wear a protector over her top because of the ordinary woman’s size, though she did wear metal gauntlets. Shuri also put her dagger over her shorts she wore on her healthy thighs.

She gave the rough impression of a thief from a game.

“Alright, then, let’s go.” (Daichi)

When I opened the door, Tamaki’s group had already finished their preparations and were leaning against the wall.

“Ah, you finally came out. You’re late.” (Tamaki)

“Did you have fun?” (Leadred)

“Leadred-san!” (Shuri)

“You three need to quiet down, it’s still early. It’s not the time to enjoy yourselves.” (Daichi)

We leave the inn having that conversation. According to Miare’s information, Samejima should still be sleeping at the inn right now.

That guy goes to the dungeon every day, from noon to eight at night. It looks like they have capture three floors each time.

The【Scorching Execution Ground】was not that far from Russell as can be seen from it being visited as a day trip. It's about a thirty minute walk from here.

We were walking on the road to the dungeon.

"… Come to think of it." (Tamaki)

Tamaki casually said as she lined up next to me.

By the way, Shuri was pouting and wouldn't come near me, as is with Leadred behind me.

"Katsuragi's plans for the future. Will you not tell me?" (Tamaki)

"… … We'll talk in the dungeon." (Daichi)

"Wait, at that time. You forgot." (Tamaki)

"… I'm ashamed. When Miare talked to us it flew away." (Daichi)

"Geez, will you get a grip? … Well, we shouldn't mind relying on each other. She said we s-suited each other…" (Tamaki)

"Depending on you is really embarrassing. We even bought something like rings." (Daichi)

I looked at the ring that I had put on my right hand. A similar one was on Tamaki's left ring finger.

Tamaki set the location at her convenience. There was no ulterior motive… though, I'll wear it to the bitter end.

“… Oh well. I’m also embarrassed from relying on you.” (Tamaki)

“Rather, that is better.” (Daichi)

According to Miare’s story, the last two demons are sealed in dungeons. One from the Beastman tribe and the other from the Dragonman tribe.

… Why do both bring nothing but a warlike image to mind?

I shook my head from left to right to rid myself of the unpleasant images.

“What’s wrong suddenly?” (Tamaki)

“… No, it’s nothing. Rather, look. I can see it.” (Daichi)

I pointed forward to the entrance of the dungeon that rose ahead of us. Then, a girl of around the same age as us slowly walked into our view.

With black hair that extended to her waist and adventurer’s clothes that looked like ours. With red eyes different from Leadred’s. She had a quiet atmosphere that was emphasized by her stereotypical Japanese feminine virtues.

However, where was this déjà vu feeling coming from?

“… … -san.” (—)

I saw her mouth move. She was crying.

Crying and smiling.

It looked as if she was meeting a lover she was separated from for many years.

She started walking faster, and was eventually running—and leaped into my chest.

“I wanted to meet you, Yuji-san!!” (—)

Chapter 5 - 『Hayase Fuuko's Feelings』

I was confused. Let's slowly organize what happened.

We headed to the【Scorching Execution Ground】while it was still time for everyone to be asleep.

I was talking with Tamaki.

I don't know this girl that clung to me.

OK?

Not OK.

This development was so erratic that I unintentionally tsukkomi'd myself.

"Ah… Yuji-san's smell after such a long time…" (—)

She put her head against my chest and began smelling me like a hamster. I could almost hear her make the *KunkaKunka* to imitate one. [TN: … Hamsters really do that?]

… No, I'm not observing the situation. What is with this dangerous child?

Let's think about this calmly.

Instead of recognizing me as Katsuragi Daichi, she saw me as Yuji. The ones involved with me that knew me as Yuji were Umahara, Minamoto, Tamaki and Hayase.

Moreover, with the condition of so much good feelings that she would hug me and even sniff my smell, it was narrowed down.

There was only one person it could be. I didn't say where I'd be, but I asked this book girl to do me a favor.

"… Are you Hayase Fuuko?" (Daichi)

I asked for confirmation. Then, the girl's movements stopped, and she looked up.

"You remembered, Yuji-san!" (Hayase)

She had a brilliant smile like the sun that I'd never seen.

"Of course. From your appearance you seem to have done well." (Daichi)

"Yes. It was painful but… I held on by remembering Yuji-san's words." (Hayase)

"I see, I see. But, why are you here? The Royal Palace is probably safer." (Daichi)

"Someone informed me that Yuji-san was looking for a companion. Besides, that person gave me the power to be able to travel safely…" (Hayase)

"Power?" (Daichi)

"That's right. Please look. Open!" (Hayase)

Hayase showed her status to me.

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Hayase Fuuko Job: Hero Level: 17

Stamina: 800

Magic: 1720

Physical: 520

Endurance: 340

Agility: 300

Special Abilities:

『Global Search』: After examining a term from anywhere in the world, it is possible to obtain information related to it. However, the medium is limited to paper.

『Crimson Eyes of Destruction』: Anything caught in the field of vision while consuming magic is destroyed. The magic consumption is 400 per use.

Special Status:

『Demonic Eyes』: Ability in things related to kinetic vision, etcetera, rises.

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Seeing her status had my eyes wide open. Hayase's special ability is not what it used to be, she obtained a new one.

So, we had the same special ability.

“Hayase! What kind of person gave you this power?” (Daichi)

“I’m sorry… I never saw her figure… Ah, but, it was a woman’s voice.” (Hayase)

I was convinced. It was Messiah. That person gave Hayase this power.

I didn’t think that she would involve Hayase.

… What the heck is that person plotting?

“Yuji-san. What is wrong?” (Hayase)

“Ah, no, it’s nothing. It’s my fault, you surprised me.” (Daichi)

“N-no. I… that’s, I believe in Yuji-san. I don’t mind if you are a little rough. I will follow you anywhere.” (Hayase)

Hayase firmly grasped my hand and brought it towards her chest. Without change she gave me a hot gaze.

… Was Hayase always so assertive? I’m beginning to question my memory of her being docile just a few days ago.

I turned towards Hayase feeling these one-way sensations from her, and Tamaki brushed off my hand that was fastened to Hayase with a serious face.

“… You, are you really Hayase-san?” (Tamaki)

Tamaki was sending her stares of doubt, still not believing her. On the other hand, Hayase returned it with a smile.

“Yes. It’s been a while, Tamaki Yuina-san. Since the【Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep】.” (Hayase)

“! … Like the real thing.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki recognized her name, and had no room to doubt because she even said the dungeon that we entered, she seemed to recognize her as Hayase Fuuko.

The unpleasant air seemed to settle down.

However, Hayase began to approach again. The atmosphere felt like it was freezing.

“… By the way, Tamaki-san…” (Hayase)

“What?” (Tamaki)

“It seems to me that ring is the same as Yuji-san’s but… that’s impossible?” (Hayase)

Her voice was cold. The glow in her eyes was gone. I understood instantly that her smile was being forced.

“Eh, t-that’s right…” (Tamaki)

Tamaki was overpowered. Is it an illusion that I see a female demon behind Hayase?

Surprised by a pressure that Tamaki also wasn’t accustomed to and, moreover, unimaginable from the Hayase until now, she suddenly ended up revealing the secret.

“Hayase-san! This man is not your loved Yuji-san, he is Katsuragi, Katsuragi Daichi!!” (Tamaki)

… You’ve already exposed me, Tamaki-san?

“Katsuragi…kun? The one from our class…?” (Hayase)

“Yes! That Katsuragi!” (Tamaki)

“Please stop joking, Tamaki-san. He died because of us. You would insult someone that is dead?” (Hayase)

Her crimson eyes narrowed as Hayase criticized Tamaki. This has become troublesome.

“Aaaah-, that’s not it!” Katsuragi did die, but he revived… it’s complicated, Katsuragi! How did you revive!?” (Tamaki)

“…That’s unreasonable, oi.” (Daichi)

“Oh, come on! Shuri-chan! Take over!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki gave up on explaining it to Hayase, and entrusted the circumstances to Shuri.

“Yeah, I got it, Yui-chan. Leave it to me.” (Shuri)

Shuri that received the baton from Tamaki went in front of Hayase and began to explain.

“Hayase-san, it’s been a long time. I’m Hamakaze Shuri, however… do you know me?” (Shuri)

“I know Hamakaze-san. However, she also suffered the same tragedy as Katsuragi-kun. In the unlikely event that she lived, she wouldn’t be here. Who are you?” (Hayase)

“I am Hamakaze Shuri. Look at this… it should prove it.” (Shuri)

Shuri opened her status and showed it to Hayase.

Hayase's complexion lost color after seeing it.

"That's… …" (Hayase)

"Do you understand? I am truly Hamakaze Shuri. Daichi-sama—that is, Katsuragi Daichi-kun used his power to revive me. And, Katsuragi-kun revived the same way." (Shuri)

Shuri conveyed the facts calmly.

"In other words, the Yuji-san that you spoke of is Katsuragi-kun. Yui-chan and I have already accepted that." (Shuri)

"… What are you trying to say?" (Hayase)

"I want to ask this. Has Hayase-san come to like Yuji-san?" (Shuri)

"Yes. I want to spend my life with Yuji-san." (Hayase)

Without faltering, Hayase answered. However, Shuri didn't stop there.

Was that because of Shuri's feelings, or was she thinking about Hayase?

"In that case, Hayase-san should return to the Royal Palace." (Shuri)

I thought it was the former.

"For what reason?" (Hayase)

"Because the gentle Yuji-san that you know of doesn't exist. Because this is definitely Katsuragi-kun." (Shuri)

"… … …" (Hayase)

Hayase was silent, staring at Shuri. I don't know how long the silence lasted before Shuri started again.

"So, Hayase-san should return to the Royal Pala-" (Shuri)

"It doesn't matter." (Hayase)

"—Why do you say that?" (Shuri)

Shuri was surprised by the reply as she didn't expected, but cheated by adding on another question.

"For example, even if Yuji-san is Katsuragi-kun, at that time he gave me courage, and that truly encouraged me. Only his name changed from『Yuji』to『Katsuragi Daichi』. Then, I love Katsuragi-kun. I will spend my life with this person, even if it is painful." (Hayase)

Hayase leaned on him. Her face was filled with happiness.

"So, I want to be useful for Katsuragi-kun. Katsuragi-kun… will you grant my wish?" (Hayase)

She asked while unintentionally smiling.

Watching what happened, I think that I failed and was no match for Hayase.

A strong power, and a trusting personality. There was no reason to refuse her.

If I made her my companion, she would be a perfect resource.

I decided on my answer.

"Yeah. I'll be relying on you, Hayase." (Daichi)

“Yes! Please leave it to me!” (Hayase)

For the dungeon capture, I gained a reliable party member.

“… By the way, Tamaki-san. You changed the subject, but I want the true meaning of that ring. You still… haven’t told me.” (Hayase)

“I also want to know, Yui-chan.” (Shuri)

“Eh-“ (Tamaki)

Tamaki was caught by the two girls’ painful stares, and I ignored it.

Chapter 6 - 『Another Person』

【Scorching Execution Ground】. This dungeon's feature is that the temperature rises every floor you descend. For example, Floor 1 is 0°C, Floor 2 is 1°C, Floor 3 is 2°C.

In other words, people that can make use of Fire and Ice magic are essential in capturing this dungeon.

We began searching Floor 10 at four o'clock in the morning in an area of intense cold. Our bodies began to loosen a little, and began to reach the point where we could move decently.

"Here, Leadred, drink this potion." (Daichi)

"I'll gladly accept it." (Leadred)

When I took the test-tube like bottle that contained a potion from my pouch and passed it, Leadred that had fallen behind removed the cap and drank it.

So far, we've had her using her magic without participating in battles. Otherwise, we would have all froze to death.

Leadred's softened our wrists and ankles in preparation for fights.

Hayase looked around the surroundings and reported enemies to us.

"… There are three Soriarnos and two Lingtons approaching from the front. Contact in fifteen seconds" (Hayase) [TN: Suggestions on what these monsters should be called in English?]

Hayase, whose eyesight had become better than ours as a side effect of Demonic Eyes, was able to quickly relay information to us from looking.

In a dungeon like this with little light it was a precious power.

“Got it. Leadred, it’s unfortunate but do it now. Tamaki move to the rear guard to escort Hayase.” (Daichi)

“OK. Leave it to me.” (Tamaki)

“I was waiting for this.” (Leadred)

Leadred drew her sword and began licking her lips as she began the preemptive strike.

“Guoooon!!” (Soriarno)

“Hiyauuuu!!” (Ringuton)

As Hayase said, what came into view were Soriarno of a size five times that of a flying bat and Lington that would curl their body and crush adventurers’ bones with their hard carapace.

“I got it!” (Leadred)

Leadred’s sword cut the Soriarno’s body in two in the air.

“Leave the ones in the air to me. Hero-sama and Shuri get the Lingtons!” (Leadred)

Leadred gleefully swung her sword. Looking at the situation, we decided to concentrate on the Lingtons first.

“Shuri get the right side. Don’t let them get behind us.” (Daichi)

“I understand!” (Shuri)

After I issued the instruction, without stopping I ran to the front of the Lington and assaulted it.

“Wind.” (Daichi)

The wind made the Lington stop moving forward. A small gap formed between that guy’s body and the ground. I kicked it up like a soccer ball.

Without killing its momentum, the Lington crashed into the ceiling. The body that was rolled into a ball opened from the impact.

“Hmph-!” (Daichi)

I pierced its abdomen with my sword before it could roll its body back into a ball. It was weak to attacks from the inner part.

“Hiu!?” (Ringuton)

A short scream from a Lington was heard from nearby. There was a corpse split by Shuri’s daggers under her feet.

“Done here as well.” (Shuri)

Understanding with a glance, Leadred who had been enjoying the fight also came back.

“… No matter how many times I see it… you are all so strong.” (Hayase)

Hayase, who had been the spectator let out her thoughts.

“For the sake of revenge, I have to be stronger than Samejima.” (Daichi)

“… Revenge… is it?” (Hayase)

Hayase tilted her head.

Which reminds me, I never told her.

“Ah, right. I am gathering companions in order to kill Samejima. Of course, both Shuri and Tamaki stand with me knowing that… are you disillusioned?” (Daichi)

“No, because Samejima-kun deserves it. I don’t mind.” (Hayase)

“I thought that Hayase would say that.” (Daichi)

And so, I was able to inform her while also gaining peace of mind.

Hayase won’t defy me, because I gave her conviction.

“All right, we’ve cooperated so far, so let’s continue as we have and find the stairs room!” (Daichi)

We stepped foot inside.

Shortly after, we arrived at the stairs room.

Like the High Wolf on the 10th Floor’s stair room of【Rigal’s Den】, there was a Giant Wolf whose body was large to make up for the temperature difference in the stair room of【Scorching Execution Ground】.

“The Giant Wolf has high resistance to fire magic! Contrary to its large body, it has high agility so be careful!” (Hayase)

“Good luck, you three!” (Tamaki)

We were supported by the easy explanation from Hayase and Tamaki behind us, and confronted the giant.

Trying to waste this guy's stamina here would be wasteful.

The reason being that had experimented on the same principal that Tamaki put to use in the【Labyrinth of the Sleeping Trance】.

That was whether my shield could be manipulated like that as well.

"Leadred, Shuri, can you hold him in one place? There is something that I want to try." (Daichi)

"Understood." (Leadred)

"Roger." (Shuri)

Acknowledging it with a single word each, Leadred leapt into the sky and slashed. Shuri made use of her small body and attacked the Giant Wolf's legs, giving it small wounds.

When the Giant Wolf tried to trample Shuri, Leadred used the timing to get its attention.

I think she was playing with the dog as though it were a pet.

In the meantime, I solidified the image. Because it was the first time using it, I was worried that I wouldn't do it right.

However, it couldn't be helped. I began to prepare.

"Spirits of the earth, create a shield and protect me. Multi-Guard." (Daichi)
[TN: Kanji for 'Multiple Earth Shields']

The developing solid earth shields entered the left and right of the Giant Wolf's vision and it took notice. Furthermore, I repeated the chant five times to build the walls up.

Looking at the wolf like a test subject, it was breathing unsteadily. Well, even though it noticed it won't be able to escape.

Now's the chance!

"You two, get away from there!" (Daichi)

Complying with my words, Shuri and Leadred stepped away a large distance.

The hands that I had opened before, I clenched as tightly as I could.

"Earth Vice!" (Daichi)

The shields rapidly moved together in conjunction towards the Giant Wolf. Because Shuri had continued to torment its legs, it couldn't move.

"Guoru!?" (Giant Wolf)

At last, the giant was sandwiched. At that moment, red blood splatted nearby. The heavy shield didn't stop, and we could hear its bones being crushed into little pieces like a demon eating its prey from far away.

Before long, its movements stopped. At that point there were no longer any vestiges of its large build, and looked like a common corpse that was cruelly killed.

"Experiment… success!" (Daichi)

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The boss on the 10th Floor was defeated in about ten minutes, and we were crushing the 13th Floor. We were in a room on that floor. It was a Monster House, though when we opened the door we left it like that, so that the monsters wouldn't reappear.

After us three one-sidedly trampling the floor, we returned to Tamaki and Hayase having a leisurely talk.

“According to one theory, due to Terias’ appearance Messiah was pressured into ordering her excellent subordinates confined in buildings in her possession, waiting for the chance of a counterattack.” (Hayase)

We used Hayase’s『World Retrieval』to discuss the history of this world from before we came here.

Still, obtaining information like this is a life saver. Because she can accurately tell us what to be careful of and the weak points of demons, our progress advancing has been fast.

“Ah, everyone, thank you for your effort.” (Hayase)

“Thank you for your effort” (Tamaki)

The girls gave us words of appreciation. Tamaki was the same as usual, but Hayase was somewhat apologetic.

“Um…” (Hayase)

“What is it?” (Daichi)

“Is there really nothing that I could do? Katsuragi-kun’s group are the only ones having to work…” (Hayase)

“What, it was something like that? Don’t worry about it. It’s not time for Hayase to act yet.” (Daichi)

Right, we can’t afford to use her power on this layer and need to preserve it for later.

『Crimson Eyes of Destruction』 consumes magic in large quantities, but it's just that powerful of an ability.

It's necessary to save it until the second half. Because Tamaki's specialty is ice magic, the same goes for her.

We don't mind that it's us three for now.

"I-I understand. Until then, do your best to keep going." (Hayase)

"Since in case something happens, there's both Leadred and I, you should't strain yourself. If we were to put so much strength in a place like this, we'll be exhausted at the end." (Daichi)

"I-is that so? I'm inexperienced so… I'm sorry." (Hayase)

"You don't have to apologize. I expect great things from you." (Daichi)

"Yes!" (Hayase)

And, Leadred tapped on my shoulder with a *TonTon*.

"Hero-sama. How far are we going today?" (Leadred)

"Samejima has been progressing at three floors per day so I'd think the 34th Floor at least." (Daichi)

He had already captured the 30th Floor. His data-like schedule for today is the 33rd Floor. [TN: I must have messed up which floor he was on in a previous chapter. I think I put the 3rd Floor there.]

So as to not encounter him, we rushed to an unexplored floor before they arrived, and meet with the dungeon Guardian before Samejima.

For that reason we continued to go down without returning to the surface. However, when it was time to sleep we went up a floor. That was absolute.

Rest is important for the body. Inside where the temperature is high, continuing without proper rest is hazardous.

“Tamaki, what’s the time?” (Daichi)

“6:30.” (Tamaki)

Thirteen floors in less than two hours. By the time they arrive at the dungeon’s entrance we should be somewhere around the 30th Floor.

Our speed was ideal.

“Alright, let’s use this place to rest for a little. Also, confirm your statuses.” (Daichi)

“Al~right.” (Tamaki)

“It’s finally possible to sit down…” (Shuri)

“Certainly.” (Hayase)

“Understood.” (Leadred)

Each gave their response in turn, and everyone opened their status windows—as I thought that, Tamaki let out a big voice.

“What’s wrong?” (Daichi)

I immediately rushed over to where Tamaki was.

“Ah, sorry. I was kind of surprised… um, take a look at this…” (Tamaki)

Tamaki pointed at the text below the Special Ability status.

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Tamaki Yuina Job: High Grade Slave Level: 52

Stamina: 1210

Magic: 3480

Physical: 1430

Endurance: 1240

Agility: 1000

Special Abilities:

『Witch of Freezing』: The effect of the ice magic is increased by one class. However, God-class magic is not increased.

『Chant Omission』: When magic is invoked, the chant may be removed. However, the mana consumption is increased by 50%.

Unique Abilities:

『Chant Substitution』: Magic can be activated without invocation by a preset action. To set an action, 『Settings』→ Do the action →『Exit Settings』.

Special Status:

『High-Grade Slave』 Owner → Katsuragi Daichi. All attacks against him are sealed. Compulsory submission until release.

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A new two-word ability was added to Tamaki's entry.

Chapter 7 - 『Frivolous Person』

Unique Abilities.

Strong powers different from the Special Abilities that the goddess Claria gives.

So, I predict—the demon goddess Messiah gave this power.

Normally, these are powers that humans cannot gain.

"… What is this? It's almost identical to chant omission…" (Tamaki)

Tamaki who was given a power outside of the normal rules was beyond surprised, and gave that reaction.

I understand that feeling. However, at least until we kill Samejima, we have no coice but to get along with the fellow who'll be giving us those powers.

That is, in other words, to be given a Unique Ability.

"… You, Messiah likes you." (Daichi)

"The demonic goddess!?" (Tamaki)

"That's probably it… well, you look glad, Tamaki." (Daichi)

"… Y-yeah, well. It's because I can become stronger. Besides…" (Tamaki)

I understand that she's mumbling as she's moving her mouth, but her voice is so quiet that I can't catch it. However, only a thickheaded main character would let this pass.

I strained my ears to hear Tamaki's words. However, I was interrupted by Hayase coming between us.

"Tamaki-san? With this are we the same?" (Hayase)

"I-I can't say…" (Tamaki)

Tamaki glanced at me and looked away. Her cheeks were faintly red.

… Tamaki can be strangely innocent…

"Hayase. Aren't I the same too?" (Leadred)

Leadred lumped herself in with words of being unable to read the mood. Hayase and Tamaki looked at her with warm gazes, as if she was a child that knew nothing about love.

The person in question didn't seem to notice at all.

"? … Ah, come to think about it, what about Shuri? Does she have a Unique Ability?" (Leadred)

Because of Leadred just now, she thought up a simple question.

All three of them including me simultaneously looked away from Leadred to Shuri.

I knew. I understood. I didn't mention it.

Because right now, that was a landmine.

“… Leadred-san? What did you say?” (Shuri)

Shuri tilted her head with a *GiGiGi* as though it were rusted with metal. Her eyes weren’t smiling.

“No, I was wondering if Shuri had a Unique Ability.” (Leadred)

“I don’t. Is it bad if I don’t? Yeah, I don’t have one. I’m different from everyone else. Right, Leadred-san?” (Shuri)

“—!!” (Leadred)

Leadred, finally noticing her mistake, put a hand over her mouth. However, she was too slow.

“I-it looks like that. But, it’s nothing to worry about.” (Leadred)

“Do you really think so?” (Shuri)

Scary. Seeing Shuri’s smile was very scary.

“O-of course I do.” (Leadred)

Liar. Her eyes were looking around. It’s obvious that you’re lying.

Shuri saw through her thoughts, grabbed the red oni by the collar, and took her outside of the room.

Help! I seemed to hear her scream something unusual, it must have been a hallucination. I decided to believe that.

“S-shall we continue talking?” (Tamaki)

Tamaki tried to break the silence that everyone was afraid of.

I also shook the terrifying image of the lovely scary woman from my mind for the sake of paying attention to Tamaki's words.

"Like Shuri-chan said, does having a Unique Ability mean the god Messiah really likes you?" (Tamaki)

"In addition to that, perhaps, isn't there another condition? I think that that was my case." (Hayase)

"I think it's also possible that you have to defeat one of the Six Demon Generals. Tamaki meets that condition." (Daichi)

"I wonder if that's it?" (Hayase)

"Hey, I think『Chant Substitution』is the power Fantra had. He was using magic constantly without chanting and was snapping his fingers." (Tamaki)

Ah, Tamaki struck her palm with her fist with a *Pon*.

"… Saying that, it's just a hunch." (Tamaki)

"Perhaps, the system may have handed it over. Because Tamaki beat that guy… she inherited it. Well, something like that. Though, I'm happy you became stronger." (Daichi)

"I see… But, I wonder why… When I thought that that guy was using it, I was suddenly displeased…" (Tamaki)

I smiled bitterly at Tamaki's thoughts. I didn't know what to say.

Fantra definitely had skill, but his attitude was awful. She didn't want to have something in common with him.

"Well, isn't it fine? I've said it already, but its strength is guaranteed." (Daichi)

“… That’s right, yeah. Well, let’s try it out immediately!” (Tamaki) [TN: ‘yeah’ = ‘un’. <3]

Tamaki stood up and said the word to change the settings.

“『Settings』!” (Tamaki)

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“Tamaki… why it became like this… you understand?” (Daichi)

“… Yes.” (Tamaki)

The 20th Floor’s stair room.

The boss of this room is a half human from the dragon tribe called a Lizardman. He could breathe fire and stop swords from hitting hit scales with his agility.

There were ten waiting.

They didn’t seem to be affected by my sword so we started chanting magic, and Tamaki fired off magic from the rear.

I knew that Tamaki was itching to try out her『Chant Substitution』for not having to chant.

But, since she’s not Leadred, I believed she could endure it.

Though my expectations were stunningly betrayed.

Tamaki annihilated the Lizardmen as a result.

The precious magic was used. The precious magic was used.

“Tamaki. Would you say the role you were given?” (Daichi)

“It is to lower the temperature in lower floors so that we can search comfortable.” (Tamaki)

“Is that right? Then why is it bad to use your magic?” (Daichi)

“It should be preserved.” (Tamaki)

“You know, don’t you? Then, how much magic value do you have left?” (Daichi)

Tamaki opened her status, grinned and laughed as she said her magic value.

“1470 out of 3480.” (Tamaki)

“I see, I see. Less than half huh. Hahahahaha.” (Daichi)

“That’s right. Ahahahaha.” (Tamaki)

““Hahahaha”” (Daichi, Tamaki)

“—I decided you are a shield.” (Daichi)

I immediately made the decision.

“W-wait, Katsuragi. It’s okay! I’ve seriously reflected on using the magic!” (Tamaki)

“Using the elixir is rejected.” (Daichi)

“Of course! I’ll use… this!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki took out the Magic Crystal that Fantra loved to use in the【Labyrinth of the Sleeping Trance】from her waist pouch.

Since it was still shining, the stored magic hasn’t been used up.

“You, when did you?” (Daichi)

“Leadred and I found it just after we started heading towards the transfer room. You know, that guy also seemed to be using the needed magic from this instead of his, so I figured why couldn’t we?” (Tamaki)

I see. I overlooked that.

Though I had forgotten about it at the time because I was so frantic, now that you mention it that’s right.

The reason Fantra could constantly use magic to that extent was this crystal stone.

“Well done, Tamaki!” (Daichi)

“Right? But, I don’t know how to use the magic inside of it. However, with Hayase-san here we can browse all of the books in the world so problem solved!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki posed.

“Then, Hayase-san. Could you take a look at it?” (Tamaki)

“Yes, leave it to me. 『World Retrieval』. Retrieve word 《Magic stone, usage method》.” (Hayase)

After her finger opened the front cover, the pages flipped through『Faster than the eye can see』.

And so, a few minutes passed before it made a sound and snapped shut.

“I finished looking it up. Tamaki-san, I got it. How to retrieve magic from the crystal stone.” (Hayase)

“… Though I’ve seen it before, it’s amazing…” (Tamaki)

“… It’s amazing. But, I thought that when we were fighting a bit ago there wasn’t so much light.” (Daichi)

“That is because, even though I quickly found the books related to this world’s history, since there are very few books related to the usage of crystal stones, the look up scope got bigger.” (Hayase)

“Hee, it didn’t find enough information… that’s surprising.” (Tamaki)

“Now, let’s start with the explanation. First, there’s a way to use the crystal stone, but… I don’t recommend it.” (Hayase)

“Eh? why?” (Tamaki)

Tamaki, whose treatment from now on was tied to the crystal stone, became impatient. In contrast, Hayase slowly told her in a way easy to understand.

“To begin with the crystal stone is a natural stone that can accumulate the trace amounts of magic contained in the air. To mold the magic, a considerable amount of magic that our bodies cannot withstand was required. For example, they performed an experiment in the past. Since they didn’t know how to extract the magic from the crystal stone, they decided to take it in directly into the body, so they tried eating crystal stones.” (Hayase)

“Do I have to eat the crystal stone…?” (Tamaki)

“To start with, as it was like air, it seems that the surface is brittle. Going back on track, Tamaki-san. What do you think that happened to the test subjects?” (Hayase)

“… … No way, they exploded?” (Tamaki)

“That is correct. Their bodies could not cope with the magic, and blew them up. By the way, when they couldn’t find the way to extract magic from the crystal stone they abandoned the research. In other words-.” (Hayase)

Hayase took the crystal stone from the solidified Tamaki’s hand and returned it to the pouch, then hit her with another blow.

“It looks like Tamaki-san will be nothing but a shield.” (Hayase)

“… … Come on, stop it.” (Tamaki)

Her expectations off, due to what will become of her from now on, Tamaki’s face paled and she sprawled out on the ground.

Chapter 8 -『Crimson Eyes of Destruction』

The 28th Floor. The temperature was 27 ° C.

As one would expect, this area was hot. It was like summer. After walking for a long time, fighting caused our clothes to be drenched in sweat.

The feeling of it sticking to my body was unpleasant.

"… I should have brought substitute clothes." (Daichi)

"Do you want to use my towel?" (Fuuko) [TN: Hayase will now be referred to as Fuuko in these]

Hayase took out a lovely pink sports towel from her large shoulder bag and passed it to me.

"It's like you brought a store, Hayase." (Daichi)

"I collected all information from『Global Search』that I thought was necessary and packed it into this bag. I've also brought male clothes." (Fuuko)

"You bought them?" (Daichi)

"Yes! Because I want to be useful to Katsuragi-kun, I bought them on the way here!" (Fuuko)

"Is that so? Thanks, Hayase." (Daichi)

I patted her head in gratitude. Hayase looked down with a bright red face.

“… N-no, though as a reward… please call me Fuuko.” (Fuuko)

“Fuuko.” (Daichi)

“Katsuragi-kun!” (Fuuko)

Fuuko was excited and clung to me, rubbing me with her soft cheek.

“… Fuwa~. Katsuragi-kun’s scent…” (Fuuko)

“… Fuuko-san? Since I stink of sweat, it’s better if you sto-.” (Daichi)

“It’s fine… Ah, here, your change of clothes.” (Fuuko)

“A-ah. But, Fuuko hasn’t left for me to change…” (Daichi)

“T-that’s right… I’ll take your clothes then?” (Fuuko)

“That’s no good, Hayase-san. I’ll keep them from getting dirty.” (Shuri)

Pushing Fuuko aside, Shuri was in front of me waiting for me to undress.

“No, Hamakaze-san. Because my bag is large.” (Fuuko)

“No. It’s fine, I’ll hold them.” (Shuri)

But, then Hamakaze-san wouldn’t be able to fight. It still isn’t my turn.” (Fuuko)

“Even if one of my hands is taken, be at ease and leave it to me to take out demons from the 30th Floor.” (Shuri)

““… Fufufufufu”” (Fuuko, Shuri)

“…” (Daichi)

A virtue-less war between maidens unfolded before me.

… I wonder why. My heart is dancing because two beautiful girls are scrambling to take my clothes.

“No no, it’s dangerous for you two. I’ll look after them. Hey, stand still.” (Tamaki)

From behind, Tamaki began to take off my clothes. She unbuttoned my adventurer’s clothes and took them.

How to say, this exchange… it looked like we were a married couple.

“Tamaki. Leave the rest to me.” (Daichi)

“I-I already know. Though please… try to finish before I am killed.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki had cold sweat on her brow. It was caused by the two girls’ gazes piercing her back.

“Alright… then, I’m counting on you.” (Daichi)

I followed up feeling sorry for Tamaki, and quickly took the clothes from her.

“… Nn. This is good. Let’s advance quickly. We’re close to the 30th Floor.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki was talking fast while walking briskly away from something to escape. Shuri and Fuuko were chasing her.

… Ah, my shoulders were grabbed.

“Sorry, Tamaki… it’s okay because you are the shield. You’ll surely be able to do it.” (Daichi)

“… Good luck, Tamaki… if it’s you, you can do it…” (Leadred)

Looking at Leadred, she was imitating a Buddha chant. Which reminded me of what Shuri did to her a while ago. I wonder what Shuri did to cause this…

I pitied Tamaki since Shuri and Fuuko reached her.

It was a scene that made me think of such a thing

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The 30th Floor’s stair room.

An unexplored room that has not yet been traversed by Samejima. That guy had finished capturing all the way to here. He captured the 30th Floor, according to what Miare coaxed out of him. Everywhere except here was definitely captured. In other words, we had no information.

Overestimating our strength too much would be a third-rate negligence.

I won’t let Tamaki use her magic until it naturally recovers all the way, so Fuuko and I had no choice but to have our temperatures regulated by Shuri.

I had Leadred guard the two, and Tamaki and I entered the room ready for battle.

Of course, depending on the situation Shuri and Leadred would also come in, and Fuuko would use her『Crimson Eyes of Destruction』.

“Tamaki, are you ready?” (Daichi)

“Yeah, of course.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki had the throwing knives that she bought before between her fingers on both hands. They seem to be for offense and defense.

“Alright… let’s go!” (Daichi)

I opened the door and Tamaki threw ten knives as the first move. They curved to the left and right and went flying towards what was enshrined in the room.

With meat falling off of its body, the Bone Knight’s eyes were bloodshot. It held an ominous black katana in its right hand, and a pure white katana in its left.

“It uses dual katanas! Wind!” (Daichi)

I accelerated Tamaki’s knifes with my magic. However, the swordsman knocked them all down with both of its swords.

And then, it stood up and leapt at us in a straight line.

“Tch! Let’s go, Tamaki!” (Daichi)

“I already know!” (Tamaki)

Tamaki defended against the black katana with her knife, and tried to kick away the bone leg. However, the Bone Knight stabbed its white katana into the ground to stop the blow.

“Na-!” (Tamaki)

Reacting to the swordsman, Tamaki nearly tripped. Once again, the Bone Knight came at her with its black katana from above.

“Wind!” (Daichi)

I shifted the trajectory of the black katana slightly to the side. Tamaki used the chance to escape.

"… … …!" (Daichi)

Its sharp gaze turned to me. It looks like it changed its target to me.

The Bone Knight prepared the right side of its body, bending at the waist—and was already approaching me with the point of its sword.

"Woah!?" (Daichi)

I bent backwards to dodge. I couldn't see how fast the Bone Knight's momentum was.

I, who barely evaded death, forgot about regaining my balance, and as I was surrounded the Bone Knight with an earth shield on four sides around it.

"Multi-Guard, Crush!" (Daichi) [TN: Again, Kanji for Multiple Earth Walls instead of the Multiple Ice Walls that Tamaki/Fantra use]

"Ah, that's my technique!" (Tamaki)

Ignoring Tamaki, I opened the hands that I had clenched tightly.

There was no choice for it to escape the earth shield but to leap up out of it.

"… …!" (Bone Knight)

Sure enough, the Bone Knight retreated to the sky. However, I already assumed that it would.

"Leadred! Shuri!" (Daichi)

"I got it!" (Leadred)

“Yes!” (Shuri)

The two understood what I wanted simply by my calling their names and attacked the Bone Knight who had taken to the air.

“Ogre Flame!” (Leadred)

Leadred hit it will three of her Unique Ability’s magic simultaneously. The Bone Knight skillfully repelled them using its two katanas.

“Break!” (Shuri)

Shuri’s hit pierced the Bone Knight’s chest. Furthermore, she planned to destroy it from the inside.

“Wind Blade!” (Shuri)

“… … …!?” (Bone Knight)

The wind blade overflowed from it, and that guy’s body flew apart.

“I did it!” (Shuri)

“No, not yet!” (Leadred)

Shuri was delighted while still midair, but as Leadred said the Bone Knight sneered at them with a cackle from its jaws.

“Undead…!” (Shuri)

We were aware of the threat posed by the undead tribe’s ability to revive so long as there was magic.

I’m sure that being brought into a war of attrition would affect the rest of the dungeon capture.

Though I wanted to save it for a little longer, there was no other choice. I used it.

“Everyone, get away from that guy! And, Fuuko!” (Daichi)

“Yes!” (Fuuko)

“When I seal that guy’s movement, use『Crimson Eyes of Destruction』!” (Daichi)

“I understand! I’ll show Katsuragi-kun that I am helpful!” (Fuuko)

Fuuko was fired up without hesitation. I consecutively invoke magic to stop its movements.

“Multi-Guard! Earth Chain Binding!” (Daichi)

In order to keep the Bone Knight from escaping the shield I also bound its body with earth chains.

Though that guy was tenaciously resisting the bindings.

“Do it now! Earth Chain Binding!” (Daichi)

Once again, it moved its arm to cut the bindings with its sword. Vertically and horizontally, the Bone Knight cut at the bindings that were building up.

“Now! Do it, Fuuko!!” (Daichi)

When I looked at her after giving the signal—there were many layers of magic squares in a straight line in front of her developing.

“Crimson light. Now, transform into magic bullets and destroy my enemies.” (Fuuko)

The shining red light increased its intensity. Magic was poured into the magic squares, and it started.

“『Crimson Eyes of Destruction』!” (Fuuko)

Crimson-colored rays from her eyes.

Though it started small, whenever it passed through a magic square it increased in size and became gigantic, and in the end was large enough to erase the Bone Knight.

“… …!!” (Bone Knight)

It swallowed its death throes. When the light disappeared, the Bone Knight hadn’t left behind even a single speck of dust. It’s as if it’s existence itself was annihilated.

“I… I… did it…” (Fuuko)

Because a large amount of her magic was consumed at once, Fuuko’s breath was rough.

Even with the Bone Knight missing, we didn’t see it revive.

As usual, the wall broke partially to show the way to the next floor. We pushed on.

–At least, we thought so but…

“… This is…” (Shuri)

“I thought that this would be troublesome.” (Daichi)

“It’s a lie…” (Tamaki)

“This will be troublesome won’t it…” (Leadred)

“…?” (Fuuko)

Only Fuuko, who didn’t know the strange situation, tilted her head to the side.

Conversely, the four of us that knew of its existence had four different reactions to it, though we all sighed out.

Now there were two things, one to the left of us and the other to the right.

In addition, it wasn’t the stairs, but the transfer magic squares that should only appear once you capture the bottom layer of the dungeon that appeared.

Chapter 9 - 『Progressing Separately』

So far we progressed on a schedule, nothing good would come about from advancing without thinking.

However, now, there were two transfer magic formations in front of us.

Is this a trap? Are we being invited?

“What do we do, Daichi-sama?” (Shuri)

“Let me think for a moment. Fuuko. Can you examine these with 『Global Search』?” (Daichi)

“… I’m sorry. I already did that, but it had no response. There doesn’t seem to be any cases of this happening in the past.” (Fuuko)

“Is that so… don’t worry about it. I didn’t expect there to be anything anyways. It’s not your fault, there’s just not any info at all.” (Daichi)

Having cleared this floor, we’re the first to get this far in the dungeon.

That is to say, this is the first time this has been experienced.

“So getting new information is impossible…?” (Daichi)

In that case, there’s no choice but to decide what to do from now on.

Even after looking around again the stairs didn’t appear as expected.

I came back here, with the two things behind me.

Does we capture the dungeon simultaneously by splitting up? Or do we gamble and choose one?

"… Tamaki, which one do you think is good?" (Daichi)

Since she was nearby I asked for her opinion.

"… I wanted you to rely on me, but Katsuragi. You, aren't you just deliberately entangling me in this?" (Tamaki)

Tamaki looked at me with jittery eyes of suspicion. She was vigilant and suspected me because recently she suffered through something much worse because of me.

"That's not it. I just thought that you'd make a sound judgement. Because neither Shuri nor Fuuko would deny my choice right now." (Daichi)

I told the last part to her in a whisper near her ear.

Shuri was affected by Fuuko and lost her composure… No, it's probably better to say that she is just agreeing with everything I say.

Anyhow, the situation was amusing.

For some reason they didn't want to damage my mood, and are desperate to please me. Even if she didn't do that I'd be fond of Shuri.

"… Well, I don't mind it if that's the case…" (Tamaki)

Though in her place, the advisor role is being taken reluctantly.

"Katsuragi. What is your main goal?" (Tamaki)

"Killing Samejima." (Daichi)

“Right. Then, spending time here is bad. And if we bet on the wrong side it would be bad, and has the potential of returning from this dungeon after capturing it. On the other hand our status values are stupidly high individually, so the demerits of splitting up are low… Do you understand what I’m saying?” (Tamaki)

“To progress separately… right?” (Daichi)

She nodded in satisfaction to by reply. Her explanation was convincing, and the fact was we didn’t have much time.

“Then, we’ll divide into two pairs. A group of two and a group of three…” (Daichi)

“What are you saying? It should be four people and one person.” (Tamaki)

“… Tamaki…! For our sake, you are using your body as a scapegoat…!” (Daichi)

“Yeeeeees? You, are you misunderstanding me?” (Tamaki)

“Eh? Didn’t you say you’d bare the burden alone?” (Daichi)

“No! Katsuragi should be alone and us girls in a group of four!” (Tamaki)

It was easy to understand that Tamaki was mad with her *Muki* sound effect. She had an interesting facial expression on.

“I was joking. Could you tell me the reason?” (Daichi)

“Talking like that is bad, Katsuragi. Honestly, it’s not like it particularly matters if you die, so you don’t need a guard. And it won’t be a problem if you take some elixirs.” (Tamaki)

“… Well, that is right.” (Daichi)

As far as war potential goes, I think that's the best. If we split into groups of three and two, I would have tried to be with Shuri.

Leadred's vanguard, Shuri. Tamaki that specializes in ice magic. Fuuko that has the strongest power so long as she has magic.

I think that they wouldn't lose to the last floor's boss.

"Then, it's decided." (Tamaki)

"Yeah, that's right. Alright everyone listen up. The left and right will be… wait, what's wrong Shuri? Your cheek is puffed." (Daichi)

"No, it's nothing… it's just that I've been thinking that you've been on good terms with Yui-chan lately… I'm not pouting or anything." (Shuri)

Bothersome. Shuri has been very concerned about her recently. It became especially obvious after Tamaki and Fuuko became companions. Though, it is cute.

Originally, Shuri was like a flower, so seeing her behave like a spoiled child made me happy.

Usually a part of her was subduing her true feelings, and I had hoped that I could see her honest feelings.

"Shuri. It is Shuri that I like." (Daichi)

"… Then, listen to me too." (Shuri)

"However, at the same time this isn't the time for that. I want to stay together with everyone here forever. For that reason it is necessary to make the right decision. Please understand." (Daichi)

"… …" (Shuri)

Shuri was silent. During the gloomy atmosphere, Fuuka with red cheeks and the red oni that was unable to read the atmosphere snuggled close to me.

“Katsuragi-kun… I’m so happy. To say that you want to be with me forever…” (Fuuko)

“Yeah. But I said everyone?” (Daichi)

“I know… though if we die, we’ll be together forever in the netherworld… fufu.” (Fuuko)

“No, because Hero-sama can’t die.” (Leadred)

Fuuko felt a chill on her back from Leadred’s accurate tsukkomi.

I burst out unintentionally.

“W-was something funny?” (Tamaki)

“No, my bad my bad. That’s all.” (Daichi)

Fuu— I took a deep breath to change my feelings from Katsuragi Daichi the adventurer to Katsuragi Daichi the avenger.

“… Alright. Then, I’ll take the right one you four take the magic formation on the left.” (Daichi)

“Ah, can I get the potions and elixirs?” (Tamaki)

“Yeah. Is this good?” (Daichi)

I took all of the potions and half of the elixirs out of the pouch and handed them to Tamaki.

Potions are for Stamina and Magic. Elixirs have a lasting recovery effect on Magic.

With so many of them nothing should be a problem for the girls. There was also something I added for Tamaki to use in an emergency.

“That’s plenty.” (Tamaki)

“That so? Tamaki, what time is it now?” (Daichi)

“11:00. We need to advance the schedule. Samejima’s group will be here in an hour.” (Tamaki)

It was three floors per hour right? Taking into consideration our speed until now it should be no problem.

“Using this magic formation, we may not be able to return to the previous floor. So, make sure to preserve a suitable body temperature and stay hydrated.” (Daichi)

“Are you my mother? I know already. I’ll do it properly.” (Tamaki)

“Then, OK. Let’s not waste time.” (Daichi)

We divided into two groups and stood at our magic formations.

“I pray that you will fight well.” (Leadred)

“… Daichi-sama should also be careful.” (Shuri)

“Well then, see you later.” (Tamaki)

“It’ll be lonely for you but… endure it.” (Fuuko)

As the four got onto the transfer magic formation, they left parting words.

“… I should also get going huh?” (Daichi)

Seeing off Fuuko last, I also drew my sword and jumped onto the magic formation.

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“Is everyone alright?” (—)

We were at the entrance to the【Scorching Execution Ground】. Today, I called out to greet my party members.

“I have no problems.” (—)

“I’m also ready to go at any time.” (—)

Sajima and Kijima that had been here for the dungeon capture since the beginning seemed to be in a rush.

“I’m also good, Hero-sama.” (—)

“… I’m also alright.” (—)

The woman I got from this area—Arianne had pink hair and a huge chest. The child with light blue short bob hair was Selen. The two people that rushed to me calling me『Hero-sama』nonchalantly on the first day were locals that had my style and face became my women. [TN: Such a run-on. Two women with faces he liked were from local area. They ran to him on first day calling him Hero-sama. They are his now.]

Since then, they have kept me company every night.

Though that still wasn’t enough.

Because I haven’t laid my hands on Sajima.

The girl who reigned over the academy, Sajima Nanami.

Though I thought that she was ordinary, it seems that she was smarter than I thought.

Even though I've planned for it to just be the two of use every night, the girl disappears without telling anyone. I wonder if it's a coincidence. Or maybe on purpose.

Predicting that was very vexing to me. I'll have to get information about her from Tamaki next time. Because Hamakaze died.

"… Hm? Is there something on my face?" (Nanami)

"Oh, no it's nothing. Recently, you've been in a good mood." (Samejima)

"… Was it easy to figure out?" (Nanami)

"Yeah. Anyone would figure it out from your cheeks." (Samejima)

"Is that so… You know, to tell you the truth… you know, I hope the wish comes true." (Nanami)

"Wish? Claria's?" (Samejima)

"Claria-sama, huh… I thought she'd told Samejima-kun… I know the truth." (Nanami)

"Na-!?" (Samejima)

Startled, my voice escaped. I looked around in a hurry, but Kijima's group was talking and didn't seem to notice my blunder.

"… Hey, you know something like that?" (Samejima)

I asked in a hushed voice so that we wouldn't be heard. Then, she nodded her head with a *Kokun*.

"Yeah. A wish will be granted if you reach the bottom level of this dungeon…" (Nanami)

"… Is that true?" (Samejima)

"I think there's no doubt since I heard it directly from Claria-sama.
……Perhaps, you might have noticed, but me being away at night is related to Claria-sama" (Nanami)
Sajima said so with a smile.

It was unbelievable, but it didn't feel like she was lying. The story made sense. Perhaps, there was a demon king at the bottom of this dungeon.

To begin with I have never heard talk about a demon king appearing since I came to this world. It might be because the demon king is hidden somewhere. In that case, the dungeon is the most likely spot.

Though I suspected its existence, that goddess did summon us here.

Though I didn't believe it entirely, it was necessary to capture this dungeon either way.

It was obvious that I was motivated.

"… Sajima. We'll advance more than usual today!" (Samejima)

"Al—-right!" (Nanami)

Sajima gave her best smile to date in response to my declaration.

Chapter 10 - 『*Girls*』

"… Hot." (Daichi)

I was in a place hot enough to be suited for the dungeon name after being transferred by the magic formation. The wall of the dungeon was red hot because of the heat.

Any hotter and I'll melt. This can't be compared with what it was like earlier.

"Ice wind." (Daichi)

I adjusted the environment around myself to a suitable temperature. Not too hot, not too cold. However, I had to constantly pay attention to the amount of magic I used so I didn't quickly run out.

Instead of using magic, defeating them with a sword was better. I slayed them without magic, though where was the Shield when you wanted it… Tamaki wasn't here.

Shuri also wasn't here, I was getting a bit lonely…

To be frank, I wanted to get cozy with Shuri. I wanted to embrace her soft body entirely in my arms. To enjoy her sweet scent…

"No… that's no good. What am I thinking…" (Daichi)

I may be losing my mind in this heat. The only problem, when I entered the range where I was spreading my 『Ice Wind』, there was a by all means impossible sizzling sound of steam.

Perhaps I was sent to a fairly lower floor. If so, I was pretty lucky.

As as expected, the transfer magic formations may have been an invitation from the guardian. If that were the case, I wanted to be moved directly to the bottom floor's stair room.

Was there a need to buy some time?… In that case, Shuri's group got the winning hand.

"Guess I should hurry up and rejoin them?" (Daichi)

I resumed searching the dungeon at double the pace.

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"Uo-!?" (Leadred)

"Kya-!" (Shuri)

"Wa-!?" (Tamaki)

"Hyau!?" (Fuuko)

Bam, bam, bam, *posun*, making three loud sounds and a cute one, we were transferred to a stairway. It was illuminated by lit torches that were encased in old-looking containers along the walls.

The stairs were in a spiral rather than the short, straight type.

Fortunately we were spared from the worse scenario of everyone tumbling off.

… Though the first person to be transferred, Leadred, was under us and let out a groan from our impact.

“… T-then, shall we?” (Fuuko)

Hayase-san, who was on the top and took the least damage, looked through her bag for recovery medicine when I heard her say that.

“… We have no choice but to go.” (Tamaki)

Answering her question that had been solved from the start, I went down step by step. Behind me, the formation was Yui-chan, Hayase-san, then Leadred-san.

“It’s not as hot as I thought it would be.” (Fuuko)

“Yeah. I’ve felt better since a moment ago.” (Shuri)

“Is Tamaki using magic?” (Leadred)

“No. Though I don’t know why, this place seems to be disconnected from the dungeon’s rule… were we transferred to another dungeon?” (Tamaki)

It’s unfortunate… but I can’t say for certain. Even from a while ago, the type of stairs were different from the ones before in 【Scorching Execution Ground】.

… Oh, I wonder where Katsuragi-kun is…

“Even though we don’t know, we need to advance… shall we go as far as possible?” (Tamaki)

Again, we traveled through the dungeon at Yui-chan’s words. Silence weighed on us, especially without any particular conversation.

Though I don’t think we are on bad terms with each other, Hayase-san is here this time… we weren’t able to bring up any topics with her. Yui-chan

and I didn't read many books, and Leadred-san wasn't the kind of person to mind these kinds of things…

Some way or another I think Yui-chan didn't like this atmosphere…

"… We have some free time for girl's talk." (Tamaki)

After a few minutes of nothing but descending the stairs, sure enough, Yui-chan dropped the bomb.

Saying that was a taboo, and I felt like hitting my close friend in the head. Because, all of us girl classmates like the same man.

But, I think that she deliberately chose this topic because she knew that.

To mutually clarify our feelings… probably.

"Girl's talk? What does that mean? (Leadred)

"Leadred-san doesn't know huh~. It's when women mutually talk about the people they like you know? Does Leadred-san like Katsuagi?" (Tamaki)

"No, I have no romantic feelings for him. I do respect him though." (Leadred)

"See, that's what it is like." (Tamaki)

"I see. I understand now." (Leadred)

Yui-chan removed Leadred-san from the loop. With this, it became a genuine three-way showdown.

"Ah, even though I don't want you to misunderstand, don't worry, it's not like I plan on ducking out. Please, don't glare at me like that!" (Tamaki)

Yui-chan bowed with her hands raised up in front of her face.

How awful, I definitely wasn't doing that.

"It may bee too late, but… If you don't want, we don't have to…" (Tamaki)

"Were you someone to draw back from such a thing… Tamaki-san?" (Fuuko)

Hayase sighed half in amazement. I thought the same.

"I-I mean, it's because you two were glaring at be so intensely." (Tamaki)

"… That's because I'm burning with hostility towards Hamakaze-san." (Fuuko)

Hayase-san asserted without losing her calm. She gave me a sidelong glance with her red eyes.

However, her expression immediately softened.

"… What, it was a joke. Though I'm certainly envious of Hamakaze-san, I am not jealous." (Fuuko) [TN: Remember that jealousy is when you think someone is taking your stuff, and envy is when you want someone else's stuff.]

"Oh, is that so?" (Shuri)

… Yui-chan. A question came to mind, though I knew it was bad.

… Though I began saying it anyways.

"Yes. I don't mind being second or third. As long as I get some love, shouldn't I be happy?" (Fuuko)

But, she continued.

“The moment when, by appealing to him, I become Katsuragi-kun’s number one, please bear with it.” (Fuuko)

Though it was quivering, Hayase-san was making a perfect smile.

… It was a declaration of war.

I accepted.

“… That will never happen. I mean, I won’t hand him over.” (Shuri)

“Fufufu. Katsuragi-kun is also a human, his mind can change you know?” (Fuuko)

If this were a manga there were surely be sparks flying. Mine and Hayase-san’s gazes crossed.

She was not budging an inch.

Therefore, made sure to demonstrate to her my dominance.

“I… took his first time. Katsurag-kun’s.” (Shuri)

“Eh-…!?” (Fuuko)

Hayase-san’s expression crumbled. It seems that that was unexpected even for her. Yui-chan blushed. Perhaps, she heard my voice during that time. [TL: lit. ‘that time’ = ‘that love affair’]

“Therefore, I wonder if it is still possible for Hayase-san to catch up.” (Shuri)

“T-that doesn’t make a difference. Because I will use my own methods to be with him without fail.” (Fuuko)

“Don’t forget about me… I also want to be with him…” (Tamaki)

“I haven’t forgotten. Rather, I’ve already been vigilant of Tamaki-san.” (Fuuko)

Yui-chan’s grumbling was quickly countered by Hayase-san.

I agreed with her opinion.

“Eh, why?” (Tamaki)

“What do you mean why…? Yui-chan. Recently, you’ve been together with Katsuragi-kun. Conversing so vibrantly…” (Shuri)

“You two think I’m that close to him?” (Tamaki)

“And didn’t Katsuragi-kun make plans with Yui-chan before? To win against Fantra… he kissed you. [TN: lit. ‘Harshly kissed’]

“… … Heeeh” (Fuuko)

“I-it was inevitable! We had to in order to win against that guy! Katsuragi was also unwilling! Rather, Hayase-san is scary!” (Tamaki)

Yui-chan managed to do something weird by energetically shaking her head and at the same time shaking both hands in denial.

I thought she looked very flustered.

When I was thinking about how to tease her, I heard a voice from behind.

“… Ah-, I don’t mean to interrupt but… you guys stopped moving a while ago.” (Leadred)

“““… … … Ah.””” (Fuuko, Shuri, Tamaki)

When Leadred-san pointed it out we noticed that our surroundings hadn't changed since a while ago.

Maybe we became too passionate in the middle of it.

Each of us gave a wry smile, hurriedly reformed the line, and began advancing once again.

To cover lost ground, we descended in silence.

After continuing for about ten minutes, there was an open door. The stairway ended there.

"… Everyone. Prepare for battle." (Shuri)

Everyone took out their weapons. I also took out my dagger with an underhand grip.

Running through at once, we passed through the door.

Our field of view expanded. The end of the stairway was connected to the room. The interior design was different.

However, there was one woman before us.

Her physique was not like a human's. She was covered with tufts of light brown fur.

Her face was remarkable. A nose like a dog's. Whiskers sprouting from her cheeks. Ears coming from her hair.

"… Welcome, to the last floor of the【Scorching Execution Ground】. I am the one who invited you here, Lily Shuraham, leader of the Beastman tribe." (Lily)

A corner of her mouth lifted up and we could see her sharp canines.

“Well, you have my regards.” (Lily)

Chapter 11 - 『Labyrinth Corridor』

Lily Shuraham. I'd heard that name recently. Miare-san told us that was one of the Six Demon Generals yesterday.

"Hey, Akina! It's been a while!" (Lily)

Shuraham of the Beastman tribe saw and called out to Leadred, who was behind us.

"Yo, Lily." (Leadred)

"It sure has been a while. There's a lot of things I want to talk to you about, however…" (Lily)

Shuraham pointed at us with three of her fingers.

"Are these children really that Hero-sama's escorts?" (Lily)

"Though I'm one as well." (Leadred)

"Heeh… So you surrendered. As I heard, he must be a very powerful person. Our Hero-sama." (Lily)

Shuraham delightfully folded her arms and nodded. As she heard… that means someone who knew of the situation up till now told her.

Was it a comrade? Or an enemy?

"Umm… even though it's unfortunate since you just reunited after a long time… Shuraham-san." (Shuri)

“Lily is fine.” (Lily)

“Then, Lily. I’ll get straight to the point, was it Miare-san that told you about the situation?” (Shuri)

“Nope. I got it from my own source. Ah, such a grim look will spoil that beautiful face! Like this one here!” (Lily)

“Ouch! That hurt, Lily. Cut it out!” (Leadred)

Lily moved to Leadred-san and firmly slapped her on the back without holding back.

… Though I didn’t let down my guard, this person didn’t seem like she wanted to fight. Compared to the guardians up till now she was much friendlier.

“Cut it out! Stop stretching my cheeks!” (Leadred)

“No～, your skin is soft as usual! I’m so envious of you!” (Lily)

Leadred-san’s cheeks being stretched even now, she was still being teased. Since Leadred-san also didn’t raise her hands, it was unlikely she was a bad person.

“… Phew… Ah, my bad, you three. I missed doing that.” (Lily)

Lily seemed to be satisfied from playing with Leadred-san and turned her fluffy appearance towards us.

In constrast, Leadred-san already seemed to be worn out.

“Umm… Lily-san, are you the guardian?” (Tamaki)

Yui-chan asked the dog-like human.

“That’s right. Ah, however, don’t misunderstand me, but I don’t intend to oppose you like those fools up till now.” (Lily)

“Uu-“ (Leadred)

Leadred reacted to the part about fools. Lily continued.

“Basically, why a test of strength? What would we do if we lose our so important Hero-sama. Fantra, that rascal… Well, he got what he deserved.” (Lily)

“You also know about the fight with Fantra?” (Tamaki)

“Yeah, about how Hero-sama defeated him? I know about all of you. Shuri and Fuuko and the Shield.” (Lily)

“What’s with that? I could only feel spite in that information!” (Tamaki)

Yui-chan got angry and was outraged

“Lily-san. My real name isn’t Shield, it is Tamaki Yuina.” (Tamaki)

“What, is that so? It’s troublesome since you’re already the Shield so that’s fine right?” (Lily)

“… Ah-. I remember talking with Katsuragi. It’s fine already. It’s fine, I am a Shield.” (Tamaki)

Yui-chan had somewhat distant eyes. It’s like she had completely given up.

Lily continued talking, ignoring Yui-chan.

“So then, you three are Hero-sama’s bride candidates then?” (Lily)

“““Eh-!?””” (Fuuko, Shuri, Tamaki)

Our voices were synchronized.

The topic suddenly changed. Moreover, since we were talking about a rather serious matter, we were even more surprised.

Why did it suddenly become that sort of a talk now? There weren't any signs for it either.

"Hmm? What's wrong? Could it be, was I mistaken?" (Lily)

"No, that's…" (Shuri)

"A-ahaha." (Tamaki)

"Mmm?" (Lily)

Lily stared at us inquisitively from our evasive responses. Tilting her head to the side, she suddenly clapped as though understanding.

"So that was it! You've already decided the bride!" (Lily)

"How did you come to that!? His bride hasn't been decided ye—" (Tamaki)

"I am Katsuragi Daichi's bride." (Shuri)

"Shuri-chan!? What are you saying without hesitation!?" (Tamaki)

"I mean, think about it. Katsuragi-kun likes me. I like Katsurag-kun. We both share these feelings. Aren't I think only one to meet the requirements of a bride?" (Shuri)

"Ku-… because it's somewhat logical it's difficult to refuse…!" (Tamaki)

"Please wait, Hamakaze-san. I am also one of the brides." (Fuuko)

“What are you saying, Hayase-san? There can only be one wife you know?” (Shuri)

Yes, one woman could only give her love to one man.This was common sense that everybody knew.

Though I told her the meaning of such a thing, it didn’t seem to get through to her. Hayase-san wore a triumphant smile.

“… …Hamakaze-san? Are you misunderstanding something?” (Fuuko)

“Misunderstanding?” (Shuri)

“I told you earlier, that I don’t mind being second nor even third. The world we live in right now has a different culture than Japan. Polygamy. In Rostalgia a man can accept any number of women. Right, Lily-san?” (Fuuko)

“Yeah, that’s right. So you three were already taken by Hero-sama…” (Lily)

“Yes! That is exactly it!” (Fuuko)

“Ah, Hayase-san! That’s wrong! I’m also-!” (Shuri)

“Would you two cut it out for once!” (Tamaki)

“Ow-!?” (Fuuko)

“Kya-!” (Shuri)

Dull pain ran through my head. Yui-chan let her fists drop on mine and Hayase-san’s heads.

“Sorry, Lily-san. These children tend to lose their minds when it comes to that guy.” (Tamaki)

“Hahaha! It’s fine, that just proves that they love Hero-sama!” (Lily)

“That’s… well, I agree. Though, let’s that aside for now, Lily-san. Could we get down to business?” (Tamaki)

“What do you mean?” (Lily)

“You purposely summoned us here to the bottom floor to talk with you… is my guess correct?” (Tamaki)

Rather than responding to Yui-chan’s inquiry, Lily smiled like a ferocious beast.

Her atmosphere suddenly changed. A heavy pressure suddenly crushed us from above.

-“That’s about it. Be that as it may, I don’t intend to oppose the Hero-sama. Since if he was able to defeat Akina and Fantra, then he’s competent enough, if it’s for the current world… Well, though I say that, since that idiot of a husband of mine is very hotblooded…” (Lily)

“Eh, Lily-san, you have a husband?” (Tamaki)

“We have the firm relationship of a husband and wife. I think that he wants to fight the Hero-sama. Because of that, I will be your opponent. That’s why, Mirage Curtain”. (Lily)

A purple veil appeared around Yui-chan and I after Lily finished her chant-omitted magic.

“W-what is this?” (Tamaki)

“… A magic barrier?” (Shuri)

Striking the veil with my dagger didn’t even leave a scratch.

Realizing that we were becoming impatient, the one who cast the magic soon followed up to calm us down.

“Rest assured. This doesn’t mean that I’m going to kill you. I want you two to take my test. I want to see whether or not you have the ability to support Hero-sama… alright?” (Lily)

“… Lily-san? Wait a second, I don’t understand what is happening…” (Tamaki)

Yui-chan was perplexed. She was trying to be calm but I was in the same state. I was doubting the memory of that friendly woman from a moment ago.

“Shield. I recognize Hero-sama, but that does not mean I have recognized you all.” (Lily)

She continued to admonish us.

“Is that alright? The ones at the side of the hero who has subdued demons need suitable ability and feelings for him. I’m just going to ascertain if you two posses both qualities. Sorry for behaving like this, but… Leadred, you stay out of it.” (Lily)

“I don’t want to hear that from you… Shuri! Tamaki! Lily is not trying to kill you guys, so relax. This fellow, she’s always liked to get involved with people’s love.” (Leadred)

“That’s rude. I try to make them succeed.” (Lily)

“I remember that Miare would always call you a『Hindrance』. Well, that’s a story for another time. For now, focus on quickly returning from smashing the test.” (Leadred)

“W-will you stop so that I can start already!? In my name—“ (Lily)

“… Umm…” (Fuuko)

Earning Leadred’s approval, Lily began to start a new chant, but Hayase-san shyly rose her hand to interrupt.

“Hm? What is it?” (Lily)

“Why was I left out?” (Hayase)

It seemed that Hayase-san wasn’t pleased with being left out of the examination for『Those who support Hero-sama』so she asked why from Lily.

“Because you seemed to be the successor to Fantra Angas of the Six Demon Generals, I passed you already. Do you understand?” (Lily) [TN: I thought Tamaki would have been the successor… seeing as how she got his Unique Ability… /confused]

“No… with all of the words that you suddenly brought up I wasn’t able to understand it all and was overtaken… though I don’t think it’s fair.” (Fuuko)

“Oh? Then, are you saying you also want to receive this test?” (Lily)

“Yes. Since… I want to be near Katsuragi-kun both in name and reality.” (Fuuko)

Hayase-san glanced at us. The crimson in her eyes gave off the illusion that her fighting spirit was burning.

Receiving her gaze, a switch turn on in me.

“… Alright, I understand. Then, Fuuko will also be tested.” (Lily)

“Thank you very much.” (Fuuko)

“You have very good manners. Then, let’s start. Mirage Curtain.” (Lily)

Identical to the one around us, a purple veil surrounded Hayase-san.

“In my name, I invoke the contract. King of the light spirits. Bestow the tribulations unto them. Reward those who triumph, punish those who fail.” (Lily)

Lily struck her palms together.

“—Labyrinth Corridor.”(Lily)

When she finished chanting, I suddenly lost strength and relinquished consciousness.

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Before I knew it, there was… total darkness?

The ceiling, as well as the walls and everything else was covered with black. I was in that kind of a place.

“… Where is this?” (Shuri)

『This space is a combination of my Unique Ability『Beast Illusion』and the darkness magic『Labyrinth Corridor』.』(Lily)

“Where-!?” (Shuri)

I looked around when I heard Lily’s voice respond to my monologue. However, I couldn’t see her anywhere.

『There is no use in looking for me. I am no here. From now on you will be receiving the first trial to clear.』 (Lily)

“The first trial?” (Shuri)

『Yes. That is—』 (Lily)

My vision suddenly lit up. I covered my eyes from the sudden dazzling light with my arm. My eyes finally grew accustomed to the light and I looked around—at the same moment I did so, I blinked repeatedly as I doubted my eyes.

A screen with an image on it came into sight. However, the problem what was in the image.

“… How come… this…?” (Shuri)

It was the building of our former world’s Okinomiya Private Academy, where we went to.

Seeing my reaction of blank surprise, Lily who was observing from somewhere announced.

『The first trial. Make the Hero-sama from your original world—fall in love with you.』(Lily)

Chapter 12 - 『*Contradiction*』

I have to make Katsuragi-kun fall in love with me.

Lily told me that was the requirement for the first trial.

『I searched through Shuri's, Shield's, and Fuuko's memories to create this world. Speaking of which, when you say『Start』the trial will commence.』(Lily)

"… You can do that?" (Shuri)

『Yeah.』(Lily)

Lily answered with a short affirmation.

"Could you tell me conditions to succeed?" (Shuri)

『You have to make Hero-sama—Katsuragi Daichi fall in love with you in order to satisfy the conditions. However, confessing from the start will cause a restart. I'm sure you know more about this place than me. Is this your school? I've never seen it.』(Lily)

… I see.

Roughly putting it, this is like a dating sim… I guess?

I am the player and Katsuragi-kun is the capture target.

… What, that's easy.

I just need to convey my feelings to Katsuragi-kun by keeping him company. That's all.

This trial is nothing. Perhaps Lily thought it would be impossible to love Katsuragi-kun's appearance from when we were at school.

If so, that was a big mistake.

『Also, take into consideration that you three are each in separate spaces. This trial will progress simultaneously. Of course, the contents are the same. Those who complete this trial will go on to the second trial. If you pass that safely I will recognize you. Sound good?』(Lily)

"… Yeah, I don't mind." (Shuri)

『Alright. If there's no problem, shall you go?』(Lily)

"I accept your offer. Start!" (Shuri)

When I said the keyword, the screen emitted a light from my signal and a flash shot out and wrapped around me.

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"What is this…?" (Tamaki)

I was amazed. An image of Okinomiya Private Academy was depicted before me.

『I searched through Shuri's, Shield's, and Fuuko's memories to create this world. Speaking of which, when you say『Start』the trial will commence.』(Lily)

"Another world, huh… So, will we be undertaking the trial inside this mirage?" (Tamaki)

『That's right. Ah, it's safe. You guys can't die in there.』(Lily)

"So… how did you create this?" (Tamaki)

I mean, don't freely look through my memories at your own convenience.

『This space is a combination of my Unique Ability『Beast Illusion』and the darkness magic『Labyrinth Corridor』.』(Lily)

"What kind of Unique Ability is it?" (Tamaki)

『… … … …』(Lily)

… Silence.

So she won't tell me it so lightly… only an idiot would reveal their power as a Six Demon General.

"Anyway… I have no choice… will you explain the contents?" (Tamaki)

『You have to make Hero-sama—Katsuragi Daichi fall in love with you in order to satisfy the conditions. However, confessing from the start will cause a restart. I'm sure you know more about this place than me. Is this your school? I've never seen it.』(Lily)

"Is it possible to replay over and over from the beginning?" (Tamaki)

『… … … …』(Lily)

"I'll take your silence as a yes." (Tamaki)

『… … … …』(Lily)

… I got the feeling that the number of her silences had been abruptly increasing since a while ago.

Does she have the motivation for this…?

Weren't the capture conditions half-hearted? The definition was vague as well.

"Hey, Lily-san. I'd be grateful for a seriously accurate explanation you know?" (Tamaki)

『You have to make Hero-sama—Katsuragi Daichi fall in love with you in order to satisfy the conditions. However, confessing from the start will cause a restart. I'm sure you know more about this place than me. Is this your school? I've never seen it.』 (Lily)

"… I have the feeling you said that a moment ago?" (Tamaki)

Our conversation made me think that she was picking a fight with me. If that's the case, I'll flood her with complaints, as this no doubt gets the recognition of a so-called 'crappy game'.

I wonder why those were the clear conditions?

Even so, that was a sudden change in attitude a while ago.

I was suspicious of the need for this trial in the first place.

To begin with, was there a meaning in making Katsuragi fall in love with me? Originally it was the opposite and we were the capture targets, so it doesn't make sense that we have to have him fall in love with us…

"… … Hmm?" (Tamaki)

Wait a minute. What's that, this uncomfortable feeling?

… That's right. The love Lily-san speaks of is something we must hold.

And yet we have to make him fall in love with us?

That doesn't add up.

Because we certainly love Katsuragi… as a prerequisite, that already included liking the Katsuragi from our original world.

If she understood that we already liked Katsuragi from our original world, she wouldn't have bothered preparing a trial like this.

… In other words, this is…

"… A meaningless trial…" (Tamaki)

As they left my mouth, they sounded meaningless. Only, the difficulty was fairly high.

"… What is this for?" (Tamaki)

Think, Tamaki Yuina.

It's a pity, but I can't expect anything from those two in this. If I don't break through this test…

Who would gain from such a thing? The answer is Lily-san.

… That's right. Lily-san, right now, what are you doing? Are you monitoring us?

… No. I don't think she's watching.

However, perhaps… This may get me proof.

Stubbornly, I once again tried asking for an explanation.

“… I’m sorry, could I ask for it to be explained again because I don’t understand the meaning at all?” (Tamaki)

『You have to make Hero-sama—Katsuragi Daichi fall in love with you in order to satisfy the conditions. However, confessing from the start will cause a restart. I’m sure you know more about this place than me. Is this your school? I’ve never seen it.』 (Lily)

… I knew it. A fixed response was given.

So, at least right now, Lily-san should be doing some other thing.

In that case, there was only one answer I could think of.

She was buying time.

The reason… I think that there are a lot packed together, but I feel like I somewhat understand.

『It’s the duty of a good woman to give her husband what he wishes for.』

If she locked us up separately with a realistic-sounding pretext and managed to go to her husband’s side… No, in that case, Leadred-san would stop her.

“Was her purpose to fight with Leadred-san…?” (Tamaki)

If that were the case she would have fought from the beginning without doing something like this. Lily-san wasn’t the type of person to use this roundabout method.

Then, what meaning was there in this trial?

… Huh? That’s interesting. I came to a contradiction. I confused myself by thinking too much.

Calm down, me. Calm down…

I organized the necessary information out loud.

“The capture conditions are to have Katsuragi fall in love with me. However, why Lily-san wants us to do this, I do not know. And yet she purposely gave us this trial. There must be a reason for this trial.” (Tamaki)

Putting these together… the capture was meaningless… the process must have some meaning… probably.

Yeah, that’s probably it. I’ll just assume that.

“… Anyway, if I didn’t go it would be bad.” (Tamaki)

Those two had probably already started. If I played I could take the lead.

“Start!” (Tamaki)

I threw myself into the light.

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“… It really is the school…” (Tamaki)

After being covered with light, I was at the Ogino Miya Academy. The desks, blackboard, even the clock, everything was perfectly consistent.

The after-school bell chimed to inform that it was four o’clock, I was sitting on a desk with my arms folded.

Near me were Shuri-chan and Nanami—they were looking down at Katsuragi who had been bullied.

“Uu…” (Tamaki)

Seeing the spectacle caused me to have feelings of guilt. I doubted the way I was.

“Katsuragi~. Because you are on cleaning duty hold the rag firmly!” (Samejima)

Samejima and his gang were bullying Katsuragi. The rag was in Katsuragi’s mouth, and his face was pressed against the floor.

… Why. Why was I remorselessly smiling while watching a scene like this?

Why did I ridicule him, why did I oppress him together with them?

… Ah, aren’t I an idiot?

I promptly tried to save him… I stopped myself. Since it would be dangerous if I moved awkwardly now.

Because this was a story reproduced by our memories.

Katsuragi had already suffered this humiliation.

… However, even with that.

Katsuragi’s smiling face popped into my head. The warmth from his hug.

Could I betray him?

Such a thing disgusted me.

So, I summoned the courage to call out his name.

—Katsuragi.

Chapter 13 - 『*First Contact*』

Me calling out that name caused them to pause and a silent atmosphere hung over the classroom.

Everyone's line of sight in this confined space were on me. It was 100% in astonishment.

"… Tamaki? What happened?" (Samejima)

"… What is it?" (Tamaki)

I carefully made sure that my voice didn't sound hollow, but was only able to say a few words.

"Calling out this brat's name… that's unusual…" (Samejima)

…Eh? I frantically endured it and leaked out a voice.

I forgot that I had used Katsuragi's name so few times.

I've now been using Katsuragi's name on a daily basis. I had gotten used to the warm sensation from every time I used it.

I want to protect that feeling.

"No, I had forgotten that Katsuragi had been called to the homeroom teacher a little while ago. I was told to bring… him." (Tamaki)

A lie. I made something up.

It’s fine. I deceived him. If I can make it out of this place I don’t care.

Samjima was silent for a short while before clicking his tongue.

“Just as it was getting interesting… hey! Go!” (Samejima)

“Ugh!?” (Daichi)

He kicked the belly of the fallen Katsuragi and left the classroom with his bag.

Probably because there was no longer a reason to be here. Classmates began to leave in groups.

Because they were spectators for the bullying by Samejima.

“Tama-chan, bye-bye.” (Nanami)

“Yui-chan, be careful okay? That guy, there’s no telling what he’ll do.” (Shuri)

“… …” (Tamaki)

It saddened me to hear Shuri-chan’s advice.

You’re wrong, Shuri-chan.

Katsuragi is gentle and has a strong heart.

He’s the person you came to like, he’s the one who loves you more than anyone.

“… Yeah, thanks. Bye-bye.” (Tamaki)

Shuri-chan and Nanami-chan cheerfully waved their hands and left down the hallway.

Probably to go to Samejima. The Shuri-chan of this time told me that she liked Samejima.

He looked good and had both brains and brawn. He was a friendly guy, Katsuragi excepted… that is what Shuri-chan told me.

However, I knew that was just a disguise… Though it was too late now, I wanted to talk to her.

Fuu… I took a long breath. It became just Katsuragi and me left in the classroom.

He was still groveling on the floor in pain.

Right now, I was one of his main bullies… So I think, when viewing it objectively.

If such a person were to try and say comforting words, what kind of things would Katsuragi feel?

That he was being looked down on? Would he be thankful?

I wasn't sure. Unfortunately I couldn't predict it because I had no experience in it, I couldn't even consider.

I could only deal with the outcome.

"… Alright." (Tamaki)

I tried to encourage myself with a small voice.

Then, here I go.

“… Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

“… … …” (Daichi)

“… … Are you okay?” (Tamaki)

“… … -!?” (Daichi)

Katsuragi didn’t believe what he was seeing and opened his eyes wide. However, he instantly started glaring.

“… What are you… did you hit your head?” (Daichi)

“Ah, yeah. Earlier this morning, I woke up after hitting the wall.” (Tamaki)

“… What are you talking about?” (Daichi)

“Can’t you see that a maiden is trying to cover up her embarrassment?” (Tamaki)

“… And now you are being bossy.” (Daichi)

“Ah, sorry. I didn’t mean it like that…” (Tamaki)

I attempted to retrieve a towel from my pouch, but noticed that my clothes had changed.

… Well, it would have been comical to be in clothes like that at school.

I was instead wearing the academy assigned skirt and sailor blouse.

Though I didn’t have a towel, I brought a handkerchief in my skirt every day.

Taking the light-blue checkered cloth from my pocket, I applied It to where his mouth was bleeding due to it being forcibly rubbed against the floor.

“Are you alright, Katsuragi? Does it hurt?” (Tamaki)

“… …” (Daichi)

“… Katsuragi?” (Tamaki)

Because I expected him to not respond, I called out his name again. With that, Katsuragi came back to reality and brushed my hand away.

“… What are you doing?” (Daichi)

“Treating Katsuragi’s injury.” (Tamaki)

“That’s what I mean! Why are you doing that!?” (Daichi) [TN: I feel that I should note, the raw has all of his lines so far more so as statements than as questions. Ending most lines with ‘… , omae’.]

That yell clearly held anger. Though, I wasn’t going to run away.

“I’m sorry. For everything I’ve done until now, I apologize. I’m so sorry.” (Tamaki)

I took several steps back and bowed.

“–!? What are yo-! Why are you suddenly apologizing!!” (Daichi)

“Because I noticed. The sins that I’ve been committing.” (Tamaki)

“What you are saying… I don’t get it…!” (Daichi)

“That’s fine. You don’t need to forgive me. But, let me treat you. I’ll be worried if that festers.” (Tamaki)

I moved to put the handkerchief that Katsuragi brushed away back to his mouth. However, he took it and wiped the blood off himself.

"… … Tch…" (Daichi)

Katsuragi put the handkerchief into his pocket as it was.

"… Don't think that I am indebted now." (Daichi)

"I don't mind. I had no such intention." (Tamaki)

"… …" (Daichi)

Katsuragi sent me an apathetic look.

"Hey, you." (Daichi)

"Tamaki Yuina. Call me what you want." (Tamaki)

"… Were you serious about feeling bad for what you did to me?" (Daichi)

"Yeah, that's right. How many times do you want me to apologize until you are satisfied?" (Tamaki)

"Then, let me hit you one time." (Daichi)

Katsuragi spread his mouth in a smirk and smiled vulgarly. If it was the other one, since his looks are good, I'd end up charmed by the nihilistic smile, but here, due to him being a pudgy blob of fat, it wasn't handsome in the least. That gap between the two made me unconsciously smile bitterly.

"Are you looking down at me?" (Daichi)

"No. However, I was thinking that you weren't cool at all." (Tamaki)

“You were looking down at me after all!” (Daichi)

For a moment I recalled pleasantly talking to him in Rostalgia. The indignant Katsuragi stuck out his fist and entrusted it to his emotions.

So slow.

Compared to Katsuragi’s punches from the experience we gained in Rostalgia these punches were very dull. I think that I could pierce it if there were a knife in my hand.

It would also be easy to dodge.

However, evading was no good.

His fist hit my face and made a dull sound. Abandoning all attempts to brace for it, I was struck and my body was vigorously knocked onto a row of desks.

Mild pain ran through my back. My right cheek too… it seemed as though it wasn’t cracked though. It just throbbed.

“… … Ah-” (Daichi)

Katsuragi let a single sound escape his mouth.

I wondered if he was regretting it? Or was he feeling pleasure? Perhaps it was the former.

Katsuragi clenched his teeth. I heard the sound of his teeth grinding together.

“Why didn’t you avoid it…? If it’s you, you could have easily done that.” (Daichi)

“Because… Katsuragi said he wanted one hit.” (Tamaki)

“… Wouldn’t I think you were lying!? Why! Answer me!” (Daichi)

“Because I couldn’t convey my feelings to Katsuragi. I truly meant my apology.” (Tamaki)

“Even if you suddenly said something like that… I know that you are teasing me!” (Daichi)

… I wonder what kind of emotions are swirling inside of him to shout like that.

Just before this I was treating him like garbage. Even if the attitude of the hateful person who was bullying you did a 180… I wouldn’t believe it. I would absolutely suspect there was some underlying reason.

Katsuragi surely thought that as well.

Bewilderment. Suspicion. Hatred. I think those sorts of things were running rampant in him.

I want to rid him of those negative emotions. I want to restore the Katsuragi from before I came to this place.

“… Yeah, that’s why I don’t mind. Even if you don’t for now, I want you to come to believe in me little by little.” (Tamaki)

“Annoying! Don’t talk to me anymore!” (Daichi)

“I won’t stop. I want Katsuragi to enjoy his school life.” (Tamaki)

“Enjoy it? My school life? I don’t want to hear that from you! Abusing me to the point of violence… now you want me to have fun?” (Daichi)

He drew close to me and grasped my collar, pulling me into a falling state.

“Don’t fucking joke around!” (Daichi)

“I’m not joking.” (Tamaki)

“Never do something like this again. I want nothing to do with you.” (Daichi)

“Don’t wanna.” (Tamaki)

“I got it. I forgive you. It’s fine with that. Stop talking to me already.” (Daichi)

“That’s not it. I didn’t apologize because I wanted forgiveness. I apologized to you so that we could smile together.” (Tamaki)

“—!! Enough already!!” (Daichi)

Katsuragi grew impatient at the repeated answer, took his hand off of me, pushed me, and picked up his bag to leave in a rush.

“Hang on!” (Tamaki)

“… …” (Daichi)

Katsuragi stopped moving at my statement.

“… Katsuragi. You don’t have to hold it in if it’s painful you know? You can open up to me.” (Tamaki)

“… …” (Daichi)

Without giving any particular response, Katsuragi began moving again and left the classroom.

Checking that I could no longer hear his footsteps, I looked up towards the ceiling.

“… I wonder if the first contact went… reasonably?” (Tamaki)

『Yes, reasonably』was the impression I got from that. Because right now, I think that Katsuragi was also surely troubled.

I won’t aim too high. Because someday, Katsuragi will definitely understand me.

… Well, the simple analysis is over…

“… Hey, they didn’t put anything away…” (Tamaki)

Looking at the disorganized desks and chairs, I sighed.

I think I should probably fulfill my duties as the committee chairman now.

Chapter 14 - 『Re: School Life』

I finished cleaning the classroom and stopped by the faculty room. It was necessary to crush every dangerous possibility.

In the staff room, I talked about the situation to the homeroom teacher. He listened to what kinds of things Samejima did and I explained why Katsuragi's grades were like that. I successfully got an agreement of cooperation from him to help overcome Katsuragi's situation. The teacher also seemed to be troubled by Samejima because was taking advantage of being the board chairman's grandchild.

Additionally, Katsuragi had also stopped by and heard about it.

… That guy's thoughtful nature hadn't changed after all…

I was genuinely happy about that.

"… Katsuragi, I'll be waiting." (Tamaki)

I got off to a reasonable starting dash and improved my mood on the way back to my dormitory room.

Oginomiya's dormitory has one room per person. Though at times it felt small, it was never inconvenient for day-to-day life.

"… Hmmm." (Tamaki)

I was now sitting in a chair at my desk in the corner of my room stretching.

I opened the notebook on my desk. However, I wasn't paying attention to it.

I was putting aside my studies to think of a strategy to improve my position with Katsuragi. Though it wasn't giving any results…

"… This isn't helping …" (Tamaki)

My adventurer clothes and waist pouch were transferred to this room. The contents were the same as they were.

… Speaking of which, I wonder if I could use magic here?

"Ice Wind" (Tamaki)

I tried to chant, but it appeared there was no effect… So no magic… Though whether it would be useful or not was something else entirely…

It couldn't be helped then…

"… I can't deal with times like this… I need to cool down from the excitement earlier…" (Tamaki)

"Whaaaat are you up to? Yui-chan." (Shuri)

"Nothing, just trying to figure out what to do now…" (Tamaki)

… … Hm?

My close friend Shuri-chan was peeking at my face from above.

… … Shuri-chan? How!?

"Uwa-!?" (Tamaki)

In my surprise I put my weight against the backrest and fell onto the floor.

"Oww…" (Tamaki)

“A-are you okay? Yui-chan?” (Shuri)

“Ah, y-yeah. Somehow.” (Tamaki)

Shuri-chan worried and lent her hand to me. I grabbed it and stood up.

“Really? Though you hit your head hard…” (Shuri)

“I’m fine, I’m fine. It was only a little painful. Not even a scratch.” (Tamaki)

Besides, it was nothing compared to the damage I took from being used as a shield for Katsuragi.

That guy, because of that one matter in the【Scorching Execution Ground】, I was really used as a shield. How long was I desperately trying to not die…? I took a few hits…

… That idiot…

“… Yui-chan?” (Shuri)

“… Ah, yeah? What is it?” (Tamaki)

“… No, because you suddenly smiled, I was wondering what happened.” (Shuri)

“… … Nothing in particular.” (Tamaki)

I didn’t say it. I didn’t say that I was smiling from remembering a conversation with Katsuragi.

“B-besides that, why did Shuri-chan come to my room? Or rather, how did you open the lock?” (Tamaki)

“Yeah. It was your carelessness, Yui-chan… ah, that’s not it… here!” (Shuri)

Shuri-chan took out the notebook that was hidden behind her back. It was covered with sporadic writing. However, there were some parts left blank.

“… These translated classics… could you teach me?” (Shuri)

She stopped, tilted her head sideways and assumed a begging pose.

If it were Katsuragi, instead of attentively teaching him the classics I’d teach him other things. [TN: ಠ_ಠ …]

“… Haa. It can’t be helped huh, Shuri-chan.” (Tamaki)

I couldn’t refuse my best friend’s request. Since my plans for Katsuragi have started to come to a standstill a change of pace might be good.

… I also wanted to keep talking about it.

“Okay. Alright, come here.” (Tamaki)

“Ya~y! Yui-chan, I love you~!” (Shuri)

I shut the notebook that had strategies for Samejima and took the notebook that had notes on the classics out from the shelf. Shuri-chan was putting together a small table she had bought to use at parties.

I told her that I would teach her. However, in her case that meant she would be firmly requesting explanations until she understood. Therefore, I let her copy from my notebook. It felt like cheating, though I kept that thought to myself.

Shuri-chan immediately said “Thank you!”.

“… Shuri-chan.” (Tamaki)

While she was taking notes from the notebook into hers I poured a little grape juice from the refrigerator into two cups.

“Wha~t is it?” (Shuri)

She took a mouthful of the grape juice.

“… What would you say if I liked Katsuragi?” (Tamaki)

“Bu-!?” (Shuri)

As though it were a scene from a manga, Shuri-chan was holding her mouth—to keep the juice from spewing out.

“… Please, wash off your hand.” (Tamaki)

“I-it’s fine! Because none came out, it’s okay! Though, apart from that!” (Shuri)

She was agitated and clapped her hands.

“Yui-chan! Tomorrow, you are going to the hospital! You did become strange from that shock to your head earlier after all!” (Shuri)

“What are you assuming with that story? Besides, I’m fine from earlier, I’m normal!” (Tamaki)

“Then, you have bad taste!” (Shuri)

“… Wasn’t that a little cruel? He also has some good points…” (Tamaki)

“Like what~?” (Shuri)

“Eh, ah…” (Tamaki)

“… Thought so.” (Shuri)

Shuri-chan started talking comfortingly and hit my back with a *PonPon*.

“Yui-chan… You should stop it with Katsuragi.. Hey, there are a few good people in our class.” (Shuri)

I felt a little annoyed and returned some revenge.

“Like Samejima?” (Tamaki)

“… Why is he no good?” (Shuri)

“Why? He is the most popular in our class.” (Tamaki)

“E-enough! I already know!” (Shuri)

Shuri-chan looked down as her face turned red. Such a reaction was cute, and would usually cause me to hug her tightly… However, it wasn’t the time for that now.

She likes Samejima and not Katsuragi.

I wasn’t happy about that, but… honestly, it made me happy.

I could monopolize Katsuragi here. Without being bothered by Shuri-chan and Hayase-san… there were times that I wanted him to see only me.

Because in reality Shuri-chan likes Katsuragi. I was second. I started to realize how amazing Hayase-san’s real feelings were.

“… Hey, Shuri-chan… You know, I seriously like Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

“So something was weird today…” (Shuri)

“That’s not it… I realized them. His merits and charm…” (Tamaki)

Katsuragi accepted me, one of the people that bullied him. As someone that he was willing to die for. Somehow or another I was selfishly hanging out with Katsuragi.

Together, together with him.

And, Katsuragi must be asleep in a place like this as well.

… That’s right. This Katsuragi should be the same as the real Katsuragi. I had an idea.

“I know that it’s ridiculous for me to say that after injuring him just recently.” (Tamaki)

“… No. Yui-chan isn’t ridiculous. Because, someday… sooner or later we too may be targets in the future. It can’t be helped.” (Shuri)

“Thank you. However, there’s no way that I’d give up. I don’t mind what you do with Samejima. Alright? There’s something that I want to do.” (Tamaki)

“Something you want to do?” (Shuri)

“Yeah. Therefore, I think I should also tell Shuri-chan.

I started to tell her my plan. In order to help Katsuragi and to not involve her, it was necessary.

Shuri-chan noticed my serious atmosphere and became serious herself. She wasn’t the usual adorable mascot.

“First of all, I—“ (Tamaki)

While improving the feelings of my best friend, I talked about what I would do.

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“Good morning, Katsuragi!” (Tamaki)

『!?』(Everyone Else)

A major earthquake ran through the class. In one go the noisy clattering quickly became silent.

Although I felt the gaze of everyone inside of the class, this was expected. I sat in the seat next to Katsuragi.

“… Why are you so quiet. I’ll be embarrassed if my greetings aren’t returned.” (Tamaki)

“… …Ah, sorry…” (Daichi)

Katsuragi was astonished and started apologizing, but stopped in the middle.

“… You. Didn’t you listen to yesterday’s talk?” (Daichi)

“I have the habit of forgetting inconvenient things after a day.” (Tamaki)

“Are you kidding me?” (Daichi)

“Uh-oh, it’s nonsense to shout here. Could you calm down?” (Tamaki)

“… … Tch.” (Daichi)

Unlike from when I talked to Katsuragi after school yesterday, he stopped with a click of his tongue when he remembered there were a lot of classmates present.

Yeah, so far so good.

Second period.

“Katsuragi!” (Tamaki)

Third period.

“Katsuragi~“ (Tamaki)

Lunch break.

“Katsuragi~. Eat with me~” (Tamaki)

Every period, I approached Katsuragi. Though I was depressingly ignored every time, I continued to charge without reading the situation.

It was lunch break now. I took Katsuragi’s hand without waiting for him to reply.

“Wai-, yo-…uo!?” (Daichi)

I took him with my hands that had been enhanced by my Physical stat and he was unable to put up a resistance.

Although Katsuragi was trying not to slip, I continued forward.

Though my destination was normally prohibited for students, I kept the key from the homeroom teacher yesterday. Turning the key that fit precisely in the keyhole, I opened the door and the blue sky came into sight.

The rooftop. A world with only Katsuragi and me. Our life would start here.

“Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

“What is it? My hand, hand, let go.” (Daichi)

“Don’t wanna.” (Tamaki)

In addition, I squeezed my hands. The sensation of Katsuragi’s cold hand felt good.

“—Let’s defeat Samejima.” (Tamaki)

“Ah?” (Daichi)

Katsuragi looked up in reaction to the sudden words that he didn’t understand.

I understood his endurance.

His eyes, like when he killed me and when he heard about Samejima in Russell’s guild, were viciously smiling.

Though he didn’t answer, I understood.

“We’ll start fresh today. From here, our school life will begin again.” (Tamaki)

After all, Katsuragi—is Katsuragi.

Chapter 15 - 『*Resignation*』

I will make Katsuragi fall in love with me. For that reason, I have no choice but to first obtain Katsuragi's trust. For that, I thought that the best thing was probably to recognize Samejima as an enemy together.

Therefore, I suggested it. If it's Katsuragi he'd definitely agree to it.

Although he would hate me at first, I won't mind even if he abused me. The process was important.

"… Oi, Tamaki." (Daichi)

"What?" (Tamaki)

"Though you talked about defeating Samejima… can something like that really be done?" (Daichi)

He bit!

My prediction came true. Katsuragi still wanted to defeat Samejima in his heart.

"It is possible. If Katsuragi perseveres it will be enough." (Tamaki)

"Me… persevere?" (Daichi)

I nodded.

"Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. Force for force." (Tamaki)

“… Challenge him to a fight?” (Daichi)

“Yeah. You’d win against Samejima in a one-on-one match. He would be looking down on Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

“Hey, are you being serious here…?” (Daichi)

“I’m serious.” (Tamaki)

I returned Katsuragi’s stare. Our stares met for a while, before Katsuragi looked away.

“… I understand. Let’s assume that I can defeat Samejima. How would you benefit?” (Daichi)

“I’ve said it many times. I want to spend school life together with Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

“It’s difficult to believe what you’re saying.” (Daichi)

“I know.” (Tamaki)

I wrapped my hands around Katsuragi’s hand. I didn’t let go. I faced him.

“However, it would be nice to start from zero.” (Tamaki)

“… How?” (Daichi)

“I don’t know.” (Tamaki)

“Huh?” (Daichi)

“I mean, isn’t that right? I don’t know how I could earn Katsuragi’s trust. So, please tell me. About Katsuragi. Lots, lots, I want to know about you.” (Tamaki)

Katsuragi's dark eyes were moving about in confusion. I wondered if my words reached his heart. I wasn't flustered, but I was taking into consideration the atmosphere.

"… … Understood." (Daichi)

He said the word I was waiting for. I naturally smiled.

"Then, I will-!" (Tamaki)

—also work hard in order to defeat Samejima together, is what I was trying to say.

"Are you misunderstanding?" (Daichi)

"… … Eh?" (Tamaki)

"Though I understand what you're saying I don't think it is worth going through with your plan." (Daichi)

Katsuragi shook off my hand that had lost its strength like an annoying bug.

"… Where was it no good?" (Tamaki)

I found that my voice was trembling. However, my feelings were limited by being dammed down to a muddy stream.

"I certainly hate Samejima. So extremely that I want to kill him." (Daichi)

"If that's the case-" (Tamaki)

"However." (Daichi)

He gazed towards the heavens, and for a moment his eyes looked sad and distant.

“It’s unreasonable. I’m trash. I have no choice but to accept it, it’s reality!” (Daichi)

“… …” (Tamaki)

It was painful. Very painful, Katsuragi calling himself trash. I clenched my fists, fingernails digging in.

However, that was because Samejima’s acts, somehow or other, had made him accept that claim.

“How much effort did you think I used? How much trial and error do you think it took? You! What do you know!?” (Daichi)

Stop it. It hurts. I don’t want to hear anymore. Please don’t say it.

… However, I didn’t stop.

“… Giving up won’t do.” (Tamaki)

“It’s not possible! I can’t win! No matter how much I struggle!!” (Daichi)

Katsuragi spat it out, his breathing became rough and his shoulders rising up and down.

“… And I can’t trust you. What’s with that? Suddenly waking up to a sense of justice…” (Daichi)

“T-that’s-“ (Tamaki)

“Just… leave me alone already…” (Daichi)

After exhausting his words, he looked like a soldier who had finally been released from service.

If I continued like this any further it would wound him. Of course, I understood that the future held joy for him.

My chest tightened.

… … I hardened my resolve. I reminded myself that this was not the real Katsuragi. This was only an illusion that Lily created.

The real Katsuragi wasn't having to taste this suffering.

"… I don't want… to give up. I recognize that Katsuragi has worth as a human being, and until Samejima is defeated… I won't give up." (Tamaki)

"… … Do whatever you like." (Daichi)

Katsuragi sighed half in amazement and started to get off of the roof.

I had to tell him something immediately.

"I will be waiting here. During lunch breaks and after school. I believe that Katsuragi will come." (Tamaki)

"… So persistent." (Daichi)

Katsuragi left the roof.

When I heard the sound of the door closing, I sat down on the floor as though I had no waist.

… It can't be helped, can it? That I could only do that much is a fact. Having come to this, I can't complain.

I was able to learn a little more of Katsuragi's feelings. I understood it again.

The fact that I didn't know anything about Katsuragi.

I had to advance before being depressed.

What I can do is to believe in Katsuragi. Unless I believed in him from the bottom of my heart, there's no way he would open up to me.

I had to stick to my word, to show that he wouldn't be abandoned. Katsuragi will come here sooner or later.

… From now on I'll be eating lunch on the rooftop, huh…

"… What do I do about this?" (Tamaki)

I still had two lunchboxes. It would be wasteful to throw them away, so do I eat them?

I leaned against the door so that no one could come out onto the roof.

… Is it okay now?

Today's lunch was a little salty.

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About two hours have passed since I went through the transfer magic formation on the 30th Floor I think?

It wasn't possible to know the time because I didn't have a clock, and was guessing by how fatigued I felt.

"Damn… those tenacious guys from a bit ago." (Daichi)

I descended six floors since then to the temporary provisional 37th Floor and had spent the past thirty minutes on this floor alone.

It was due to the Iron Rabbits I've been fighting.

The rabbit could temporarily cause its body to become metal, and would be in groups of no less than three.

In other words, every encounter against them was many-on-one. Additionally, their bodies heated up because of the hot temperature.

Getting hit would become a considerable wound. They were small and quick.

“Kyui!!” (Iron Rabbit #1)

The head of Iron Rabbit #1 who was in front of the others had a shining luster and it flew towards my abdomen. Being in such a low floor they had satisfactory speed and a high physical strength too.

However, I’ve already fought them many times. To some extent, I’ve memorized their patterns. Seeing their white afterimages in both sides of my vision, I sidestepped the decoys.

“Ra-!” (Daichi)

I leapt, changing my posture so that my back was skimming the ceiling. With both rabbits’ heads approaching from the left and right, I put my hands out in front of me and fired Wind at them.

“Kyu!?” (Iron Rabbit #1)

“Kyuki!” (Iron Rabbit #2)

Both rabbits fell down from the sudden gust, there was no way I’d overlook it. I took the dagger out of its case and threw it at the Iron Rabbit on the left, while I slashed at the Iron Rabbit on the right. [TN: Double-edged military dagger.]

“This is your end!!” (Daichi)

I turned around in order to strike Iron Rabbit #1, who was trying to rocket head butt me from behind, with my sword.

An earsplitting metallic sound rang out. Because the Iron Rabbit took the vibrations directly to its brain, its movements became slow.

I seized its neck and put all of my strength in the grip to break it.

Three light particles ascended towards the sky when it died.

After confirming its death I wiped the sweat that had gathered on my brow with my arm.

“It’s hot!!” (Daichi)

I immediately redeployed the Ice Wind that had been stopped during it because I became too focused on the battle.

I-I thought I’d die…

I’d really hate to be dissolved and absorbed by this dungeon like slime. If I died I wouldn’t be able to touch Shuri’s body.

… Oi, no, wait up. I won’t die. Thanks to the power that goddess gave me.

… I was becoming very tired…

“Capturing a dungeon without taking a break is intense…” (Daichi)

Just in case some monster appeared, to be able to deal with them I sat in the middle of the pathway, sword in hand.

As expected, I felt the value of companions at times like this… back then, I didn’t try to rely on anyone. Since everyone around me were enemies.

Thinking about it, I've come far from back then by continually going through some unbelievable days.

Living with and liking a girl, depending on the idiot committee chairman, and laughing with a demon. Most recently a book girl started giving me her affection.

"… …" (Daichi)

My eyes were closed and I was recalling many things.

They were all indispensable. I want to protect them.

Those feelings stirred me.

"… I've got to quickly reach the bottom layer, to meet up with everyone." (Daichi)

Standing up, I did some light stretched and started walking to the door of the room that was connected to the next floor.

Chapter 16 - 『*Failure*』

“Where am-…!?” (Shuri)

When I opened my eyes, there was certainly Oginomiya Academy’s classroom that we strove to study in.

My sight hurriedly darted around. Then, an unpleasant scene entered my sight.

“Katsuragi~.You are on cleaning duty so you have to hold the rag firmly!” (Samejima)

Samejima was bullying Kasturagi-kun. His face was gripped and being rubbed against the floor.

… What are these people doing?

Stop it.

My shoulders quivered as rage flared up in my core.

“Did something happen? Shuri-chan?” (Nanami)

Next to me, Nanami-chan was worried and asked. She also wore a pained expression, looking away. My other friend, Yui-chan, was in contrast viewing the scene happily.

This was insanity. That’s what I thought.

I have to help. I must help him. Because nobody other but me understands him.

Save Katsuragi-kun from that group of garbage.

I ran over to Katsuragi-kun when I could no longer stand it. After pushing the hindrances, Samejima's group, out of the way, I took the rag out of his mouth.

"Npu-!" (Samejima)

Samejima was unable to avoid me pushing him off balance and was beautifully hit in the face.

Serves him right.

"… Oi, Hamakazi. What are you doing?" (Samejima)

Samejima asked with a vein appearing on his forehead.

I boldly smiled while standing before Katsuragi-kun to protect him.

"I thought I would give you a taste of what Katsuragi-kun is feeling." (Shuri)

"You… are you fucking joking?" (Samejima)

"You heard what I said. Why would I ignore something like this?" (Shuri)

"Because that guy is garbage. Do you understand? No one in the world wants defective merchandise. No one will be sad even if I break him." (Samejima)

"Yeah. Shouldn't Hamakaze get away from him?" (—)

“Or rather, did you seriously… Perhaps, did you come to like Katsuragi?” (—)

The classroom was filled with laughter and spite.

I gritted my teeth and held my temper.

What are these guys? So annoying.

Even though you don’t know about Katsuragi-kun at all. How could you say such a thing?

… … I can’t forgive them.

“… Shut up.” (Shuri)

“Ahn?” (Samejima)

“I told you to shut up, sleazebag. I will not show mercy to anyone who speaks badly about Katsuragi-kun.” (Shuri)

I glared at the cocky guy in front of me.

I warned him. Any more and he would forfeit his life.

However, that trash looks like he didn’t understand.

“… Hamakaze. Didn’t you also bully that guy with us before? So you had that kind of hobby huh? Did I guess right?” (Samejima)

Samejima laughed at me in derision. Everyone in the classroom sneered at me in agreement.

This fellow is really noisy.

Therefore, I shut him up.

“Aga-…?” (Samejima)

In an instant, I drew close to his chest and performed an uppercut on him. Mercilessly using power that far exceeded an ordinary person’s, his upper body flew up and top of his head struck the ceiling from the blow to his head. There was a *Gusha!!* sound.

“… S-Samejima?” (Umahara)

Umahara called out to Samejima but there was no reply. Only blood came out.

“U-uwaaaaaaaa!?” (—)

Someone screamed.

Why would I care?

I grabbed the heads of people near me and slammed them into desks.

Over and over again.

After making sure that their arms hung limp and powerless, I threw them towards the bunch who didn’t want to dirty their own hands and just arrogantly immerse themselves in watching someone weaker.

“… Who’s next?” (Shuri)

An easily understood blood thirst emanated from my entire body. Those words triggered my classmates to scramble to leave the classroom.

Once danger reached your body, you would eventually value your life more than another's. Confirming it with a sidelong glance, Yui-chan was included in that as well.

She didn't know.

After all, this world was one Lily created, a fake world based on our memories.

The real Yui-chan would have gladly cooperated with me.

… Leaving that aside.

I turned around and approached Katsuragi-kun who was lying on the floor. His mouth was opening and closing. He was probably surprised at what he just saw.

Even so it couldn't be helped. Since this version of him had never seen a person die.

"There's no need to be disappointed, Katsuragi-kun." (Shuri)

I embraced Katsuragi-kun.

My dear, dear Katsuragi-kun.

"Eh-… ah-…" (Daichi)

He was unable to articulate his words.

He body was trembling little by little. Katsuragi-kun is the gentle person who forgave Yui-chan and I. Perhaps, he felt some guilt in the corner of his heart.

Then, I had to ease his anxiety.

Though it was a little embarrassing I buried Katsuragi-kun's face in my chest like a mother embracing her child.

"Be relieved, Katsuragi-kun. No one will hurt you anymore. I will protect Katsuragi-kun if anything happens." (Shuri)

Firmly, firmly I held him. For a long, long time.

However, on the contrary Katsuragi-kun pushed me away.

"Eh?" (Shuri)

I fell down from the unexpected impact. Katsuragi-kun's raised his face and extended his arms.

His face was filled with fear. Contempt was mixed into his gaze.

… Why?

"Y-you… what did you…" (Daichi)

"I was rescuing Katsuragi-kun?" (Shuri)

"Not that! You murdered him!!" (Daichi)

Murder. Ah, right.

I definitely killed someone.

… However.

"What about it?" (Shuri)

"!?" (Daichi)

“I mean, I think what these guys constantly did to Katsuragi-kun was much more painful.” (Shuri)

“Y-you, what are you saying…” (Daichi)

“I said that it was alright that they died. Because it was compensation for the crimes they’ve committed until now.” (Shuri)

I walked up to Katsuragi-kun with open arms.

“I like you, Katsuragi-kun. I love you.” (Shuri)

I told him my feelings. Knowing this, Katsuragi-kun would accept me.

I thought that.

However, he threw back a cruel remark.

“Stay away!! You monster!! You’re disgusting!” (Daichi)

Katsuragi-kun was frightened from when I killed Samejima and the other classmates, his face was distorted.

Collapsing in tears, he retreated every time I took a step.

“W-what’s wrong, Katsuragi-kun? I am yours.” (Shuri)

“Stay away!” (Daichi)

Complete rejection.

… Why?

I like Katsuragi-kun so much. I would do anything for Katsuragi-kun.

I erased Samejima's group that Katsuragi-kun cursed and wanted revenge on. I stopped the other classmates as well. I told you what I honestly thought.

"Katsuragi…kun…" (Shuri)

"Stop it! Shuri-chan!" (Nanami)

"Kya-" (Shuri)

Still, someone approaching me from the side and pushing me away was totally unexpected.

I thought that Nanami had surely left with the others.

"Nana…mi?" (Shuri)

"Katsuragi-kun! Come here!" (Nanami)

"… A-aah!" (Daichi)

Pulling Katsuragi-kun's hand, Nanami hurried out of the room.

Katsuragi-kun's retreating figure went with her.

Ah… don't go, Katsuragi-kun.

Why… why…?

I then suddenly lost consciousness.

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"… I'm back here…?" (Shuri)

When I came to, I was in front of the image from before.

The school building was a flat plane rather than three-dimensional. Looking around there were only black walls.

After all, I came back to this place…

『I forced the Game Over. I don't think your favorable impression would rise from there… I wonder if you are unexpectedly an idiot?』(Lily)

Lily's voice came just as I was thinking about that. Her words pierced through my chest like an arrow.

『Going to the extent of suddenly killing someone mercilessly in front of Hero-sama huh. Hero-sama wasn't used to seeing things die before coming here you know? … And yet you chose to do just that… I have nothing to call you but an idiot.』(Lily)

"U-… B-but, I was helping Katsuragi-kun!" (Shuri)

『He wouldn't come to the conclusion that the young lady who just murdered the person who was bullying him liked him just because you embraced him and told him how you felt!! Don't you understand!?』(Lily)

Lily's point was reasonable. Now that I had calmed down, I was also regretting my actions.

Yeah. The Katsuragi-kun from here doesn't know my feelings, but that doesn't mean we won't come to like me.

And yet I selfishly explained it at my own convenience.

… I may have rushed it a bit.

What now?

It's decided. I'll be like Yui-chan, then.

She's my best friend. Therefore, I believe I know all about her good points.

If I approach him being cute and friendly like Yui-chan, maybe I'll sway Katsuragi-kun's feelings. Although he himself says otherwise, I can't help but worry about that.

『From just that? You had a Game Over at the start.』(Lily)

"… And the other two? Do they start in the same situation?" (Shuri)

『Everyone has to go through their own process. That Shield is particularly skilled though. She is probably the best fit for the position.』(Lily)

"I-is that so…" (Shuri)

『… … Well, calm down and quickly try the challenge the second time. If you don't, those two will snatch Hero-sama away from you.』(Lily)

Hearing Lily say that, I imagined the scene. Talking and smiling with Yui-chan and Hayase-san in his arms… while my head hung down behind them.

… I don't want an unpleasant future like that.

"… I got it. I'll go immediately." (Shuri)

『That's the spirit.』(Lily)

Lily was cajoling me, but what she said was true.

I couldn't afford to nonchalantly be defeated here.

"… This time I will definitely…!" (Shuri)

While slapping my cheeks to fire myself up, I jumped into the image.

Chapter 17 - 『Making A Mistake, Apologizing, Starting』

“Yeah, it’s good… isn’t it.” (Tamaki)

I murmured my thoughts on the lunch I made while closing the lid of the lunchbox. I laid it on top of the other lunchbox that was once again left unopened.

Two weeks had already passed since that day.

I was disregarded by him in the classroom even if I talked to him since the first week. Nevertheless, he immediately left the classroom once lunch break started since the start of the week, coming back just before it ended. After school Katsuragi’s time was stolen by Samejima.

Due to that, there hasn’t been any development with him.

As I didn’t even interact with him anymore, it seems that our classmates took it all as a temporary delusion. They took it as me fulfilling my role as committee chairman.

Therefore, nothing in particular happened.

Katsuragi was still bullied daily. I feigned friendliness and played the honor student every day.

As it was now, nothing had changed.

Thinking about it was troublesome so he gave up and『Resigned』. He consented, and accepted the status quo as it was.

It was difficult to sway the hearts of those who had『Resigned』. So, I could do nothing but slowly make progress by waiting for him on the rooftop during lunch breaks and after school.

I looked at my wristwatch, it was five minutes until the start of fifth period's class. I would be late if I don't return soon.

"Because he didn't come today as well… another X." (Tamaki)

I took a small notebook out of my pocket and put filled the column for today's date.

This is the Katsuragi observation diary that I've had since that day.

I was once again reminded that I did not know anything about Katsuragi since coming to this world.

Though I thought about doing it because I was near him, above all I just wanted to know more about him.

Shuri-chan already seemed to know. She'd been with him longer than me. So, Shuri-chan had an advantage.

I had to make an effort to make up the difference.

"… I wonder what Katsuragi is doing…" (Tamaki)

I can't see a way out.

Being in such a state, I sighed in disappointment at my inability to break down my worthlessness.

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December 8　XX

Katsuragi didn't eat his lunch box today. There was definitely always a meal for him. I think Samejima stamped on everything. Sure enough, it was thrown into the trash. However, after Samejima was satisfied and left him, he took out some spare bread. He laughed in spite of himself.

December 9　XX

December 10　XX

December 12　XX

December 17　XX

Samejima's bullying was even more terrible today. However, I didn't stop him. Saying that, I wasn't able to stop him. I was irritated. I wonder if there's something I can do?

December 20　XX

Recently, I've felt tired. My body is sluggish. When I measured my temperature I had a low-grade fever. I thought it was safe if it was just this much and though I went to school, I hit my limit just before lunch break. I fell over because of that. I had to break my promise to Katsuragi for the first time. Now, I don't know what I should do anymore.

December 21　XX

I went to school after my temperature recovered and there was a loose-leafed notebook filled with information from yesterday's lesson on top of my clean desk… I wonder if it was Nanami? I asked and it seemed that's

how it was, though I have to say… I wonder if she was agitated. Anyways, she has my gratitude. Katsuragi also didn't come to the roof today.

December 22 —X

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"… It's no good…" (Tamaki)

Flipping through the pages, I closed the notebook and put an X through today's date.

Another month.

I wondered how much time passed in the real world. I don't mean that I think that an entire month has passed… but Katsuragi may encounter Samejima and fight him by himself.

That's no good. It's too dangerous.

I have to clear this and go to him soon…

… But, I wonder if I can do it…

"Yui-chan!" (—)

"… Eh-, ah, yes!" (Tamaki)

My consciousness returned with my name being unexpectedly called.

The perpetrator was Nanami, who had called out anxiously.

"Are you alright, Yui-chan? You didn't answer after I called you many times…" (Nanami)

“Y-yeah. Sorry. I was in a bit of a daze.” (Tamaki)

“Is it from the fever? It’s been so cold out every day. Your temperature just returned to normal too.” (Nanami)

“No, it’s not like that. It’s alright, I’m fine.” (Tamaki)

“If so that’s good…” (Nanami)

“Other than that, Nanami. Did you have anything to talk to me about?” (Tamaki)

“Ah, yeah. There will be a gathering of the committee chairman from each class after school today for a conference. The location is the multipurpose room on the third floor so I came early to tell you.” (Nanami)

“Got it. Thanks for the message.” (Tamaki)

“Yui-chan, where are you going?” (Nanami)

“The staff room?” (Tamaki)

“But, the teacher is coming, and class will start…” (Nanami)

“It’s fine, it’s fine. It’s homeroom class, after all. And the one I have business with is our homeroom teacher.” (Tamaki)

“… What business?” (Nanami)

“Though I had asked Shuri-chan to openly hear me out… I want to reduce the burden on her a bit… I guess.” (Tamaki)

I had talked with Shuri-chan about my feelings concerning Katsuragi before.

After that, she's been having a good time hanging out with Samejima after school before returning to the dormitory. Shuri-chan said it was killing two birds with one stone.

Though I advised her to stop it with Samejima, she refuted saying that she wouldn't recognize Katsuragi either.

Because of that, the amount of after school bullying has decreased to once per week.

So I was thinking about changing the meetings to be held in this classroom. That way Samejima would be forced to leave the classroom.

"Well, I'll be off then." (Tamaki)

I said so and left the classroom.

At that time, Nanami's eyes gaze shifted to Katsuragi as she seemed to decide something.

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"Then the meeting is adjourned. Bow." (—)

『Thank you very much.』(All)

The committee said their farewell and broke up. The contents of the agenda was Oginomiya Academy's school event. Each class would hold a play to make their last memories of the school year. It would be before spring break began. The best works would be used as PR videos for freshmen.

Therefore, screenplays will be submitted one week from now. The sets must be finished within two months, a fast pace. Though it was sandwiched by winter break, it was a well-known fact that it wasn't enough time. It puts

a lot of responsibility on the committee chairmen, thinking about it was depressing.

“Haa…” (Tamaki)

I put the documents away into my bag—and incidentally, I noticed that one lunch box was missing.

“Did I leave it on the rooftop…?” (Tamaki)

That fact further exacerbated my mood. Recently, opening the rooftop door was troubling.

It was scary.

Katsuragi wouldn’t be there. However, the empty world spread out.

I wanted to『Give Up』. [TN: Same kanji used earlier for Katsuragi’s “Resigned”]

However, I would not cross that line.

Fear was born during that interval.

“… It’s no use hesitating!” (Tamaki)

I turned the doorknob.

The door was less than two meters tall but had a presence many times larger… though that was impossible.

“… I will believe in you.” (Tamaki)

Gachari. An inorganic sound rang as the door opened.

My eyelids that were shut on reflex slowly opened.

Looking at the place where I always sat eating, there was a visitor.

“Katsu…ragi…” (Tamaki)

It was really Katsuragi.

Muffler wrapped around his neck, he let out a white breath, and was rubbing his hands together to warm them from the friction.

“… Ah, you finally came.” (Daichi)

Having noticed me, Katsuragi wrapped the lunchbox and carried it lying flat on its side and walked over to me.

Eh? Eh?

“K-Katsuragi. Why?” (Tamaki)

“Why you ask… that’s…” (Daichi)

Katsuragi was embarrassed and scratched his cheek. He wouldn’t look at me.

“It’s… how should I put it… I was acting like a child… I was at fault. That time, I yelled at you.” (Daichi)

“Ah, n-no. I was insensitive.” (Tamaki)

“That’s not it. At that time, I… you were accurate… I was frustrated. Because of that I vented my anger at you… I’m very sorry.” (Daichi)

“N-no, I don’t particularly mind.” (Tamaki)

“Still, I want to apologize. And I have another favor to ask.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi bowed. He conveyed how serious he was in one go.

“I want to defeat him. However, I know that I have no strength. I’ll make an effort. I’ll do anything. Nothing could be more painful than right now! So, please help me! Please!” (Daichi)

… Eh? Eh? Eh?

W-what should I do?

For my part, I wasn’t worried at all. Or should I say, I wouldn’t do something like ask what caused him to change.

It was nice to be relied on by Katsuragi, I didn’t know that I had such a desire.

He said something like that because he trusted me… ah, what to do?

It felt like crying.

“Ka-Katsuragi!” (Tamaki)

“W-what?” (Daichi)

“I’ve always waited here for Katsuragi!” (Tamaki)

“That was really my bad. I was stubborn… sorry.” (Daichi)

“Day after day, it was amazingly cold!” (Tamaki)

“Oh, was it?” (Daichi)

“Therefore!” (Tamaki)

I suddenly extended both of my hands, and asked him while putting on as calm of an expression as I could.

"… Therefore… because of that, right now, would you warm me up…?" (Tamaki)

My face was hot. It was definitely bright red. I was embarrassed so I didn't want him to see me.

"L-let me see… is this okay?" (Daichi)

"… Yeah. Hurry up, it's cold." (Tamaki)

"O-oh…" (Daichi)

Katsuragi timidly stretched out one of his arm and wrapped it around my waist. I leaned on him.

Warm. I was relieved. I wanted to stay like this.

"T-Tamaki?" (Daichi)

… He called me by name for the first time. I couldn't stop smiling.

"A-are you alright?" (Daichi)

"Why are you worried?" (Tamaki)

"It's… the first time I've done something like this… saying those things, it's embarrassing." (Daichi)

"… I'm happy. With that, I'm Katsuragi's first." (Tamaki)

"… Tamaki. You should absolutely never say that to a man you know? Because most will become a wolf." (Daichi)

“Though I don’t understand well… got it.” (Tamaki)

I wonder why Katsuragi said to knock it off. Next time I’ll be careful.

“… By the way, Tamaki. Isn’t this enough?” (Daichi)

“… … … Not a chance.” (Tamaki)

“… Is that so? … Let me know when you are satisfied so we can continue.” (Daichi)

“O~kay…” (Tamaki)

I squeezed him with my arms tighter.

After ten minutes passed, I was finally satisfied and we separated.

Chapter 18 - 『*Lunch*』

Katsuragi and I sat side by side on the rooftop. Though it would have been good to return to the dormitory, it would have been troublesome if someone saw us.

It still wasn't desirable.

"… Come to think of it, why did Katsuragi suddenly come to me? I also think hearing it was strange." (Tamaki)

"… Well, I was definitely anxious about it… Well, today, when Tamaki attended the committee you called Samejima away… That showed me how hard Tamaki's been trying. Because of… what's wrong?" (Daichi)

"Ah, no, I-I wasn't particularly trying hard… go on, because of what?" (Tamaki)
"O-oh. I was scolded. I was called a coward." (Daichi)

"E-eh…" (Tamaki)

The unexpected words were surprising.

A coward… I can't imagine Nanami saying something like that.

I mean, doing that while I wasn't there…

However, I'm genuinely grateful for my close friend's help. Next time, I have to treat her to something.

“I had second thoughts, and changed my mind about coming here… In the end, I had nothing. Without moving forward, giving up, and carrying on as usual is something only cowards do… When I was wondering what I should do… Tamaki’s face came to mind… I’m an idiot, finally noticing it.” (Daichi)

“… Is that so, is that so.” (Tamaki)

I was attentively watching his childish monologue with a warm gaze. Katsuragi’s face grew a little sullen.

“… You look a little glad, Tamaki. Even though talking about this is embarrassing to me…” (Daichi)

“Well, after all I’m the first one that came to mind you know? Because Katsuragi kept me in mind… it’s normal to be this happy.” (Tamaki)

Since Katsuragi also exposed how he felt, I also confessed my true feelings.

Then, Katsuragi was taken aback and looked away from me.

“What’s wrong? Was it surprising for me to say something like that?” (Tamaki)

“N-no, that’s not it… Well, it’s fine. That lunchbox. I heard from Sajima… you’ve been making it for me?” (Daichi)

“Yeah. Because Katsuragi only ever has bread, it’s bad for your health if you don’t occasionally eat nutritious food.” (Tamaki)

“Thank you very much for paying attention to that extent. It was really delicious.” (Daichi)

“That’s good then. It was worth making them.” (Tamaki)

“I wonder if I should say you’re welcome at a time like this.” (Daichi)

“Well, I wonder.” (Tamaki)

“… …” (Daichi)

“…” (Tamaki)

『… …』(Both)

After laughing a bit, silence filled the air.

… Unable to continue the conversation I said something strange.

W-what do I do? I never spoke to the Katsuragi of this time in the first place…

Anyway, it will be awkward if I don’t say something!

“K-Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

“What?” (Daichi)

“It’s… Katsuragi wants to defeat Samejima right?” (Tamaki)

“Yeah, that’s right. I don’t want to lose. I don’t want to give in. I’ll do anything to defeat him.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi’s determination seemed to harden considerably. Well, it’s easy for me.

With his motivated gaze, my switch was flipped. Otherwise it would have been impolite to him.

“… Got it. We’ll start immediately tomorrow then.” (Tamaki)

There are no classes tomorrow from the closing ceremony until morning and many of the students return to the dormitory.

Fortunately the day after tomorrow is also the start of winter break so students generally attend as they please. That said, I need to finish up the proposal and submit it.

That aside, other students return to their parents' home at this time.

Naturally, that includes Samejima.

These two weeks will be a contest. How much foundation can we prepare?

"… Alright, I've decided! Special training starts tomorrow! Come here after school!" (Tamaki)

Katsuragi vigorously stood up with a snap when I pointed at him. He smiled wryly and nodded.

"Got it… all good then?" (Daichi)

Katsuragi held out his hand. I returned the gesture and gripped his hand.

"Yeah, all good." (Tamaki)

And thus our Anti-Samejima Alliance was formed.

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Today is a clear day in the middle of winter break.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the rooftop we're on is our base. It is a very convenient place because, excluding me who has the key, you cannot freely come and go from here.

In other words, we won't be found out no matter what we do.

"Uooo!" (Daichi)

Bathed in the light of day, Katsuragi was glistening in sweat from his usual constant practice.

The contents were simple, I would wrap a rope around my arm and Katsuragi would pull on it. That's it.

However, I am throwing Katsuragi with a one-armed shoulder throw. Instead of using my arm like normal, I was using a rope.

"Redeem yourself, Katsuragi. I haven't moved an inch!" (Tamaki)

"Ku… raaah!" (Daichi)

The rope that was loosening straightened. Evidence that he was putting all of his strength into it.

… I still didn't move though.

The purpose of this exercise was to build up his strength.

To be able to move me, that is, you would have to exceed my physical status.

Though it was difficult, there was another reason for this. If Katsuragi found himself in a contest of strength, he would first of all need to become accustomed to facing an overwhelming strength and gain self-confidence.

Still, some people would think that a man losing to the power of a woman is embarrassing…

"… Damnit…!" (Daichi)

Katsuragi had a personality that that applied to. With this the chance of him stopping lowered.

“Ten minutes left until we rest so give it your all!” (Tamaki)

“Yeah…!” (Daichi)

Katsuragi pulled the rope with all of his body weight.

Of course, I didn’t move at all.

“Alright. That’s enough for today. Here’s a drink and towel.” (Tamaki)

“T-thank you…” (Daichi)

Katsuragi laid down face up and put the towel on his face, with the bottle sideways to cool down.

Sitting down next to him, Katsuragi sat up.

“… Haa… to not move at all… What kind of muscles do you have?” (Daichi)

“Want to feel?” (Tamaki)

I flexed and produced a small, well-developed bicep. Katsuragi poked it with his finger, his mouth opened with doubt.

“… Really, where are all of your muscles?” (Daichi)

“Maiden’s secret.” (Tamaki)

I placed my index finger on my mouth, smiling mischievously to tease him.

“… That’s cheating.” (Daichi)

“Hmm? Did you say something?” (Tamaki)

“Nope, nothing.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi didn’t want to pursue the topic and interrupted the conversation by drinking his sports drink.

And so, I started to think about everything that was said, when there were three knocks on the door with a bad timing.

Yes ye~s. Give me a moment~.” (Tamaki)

So that Katsuragi doesn’t move I went to the door to confirm the password that only authorized people know about.

“What are Shuri-chan’s three sizes?” (Tamaki)

『83-54-80 from top to bottom, she likes Samejima-kun.』(—)

“Your name.” (Tamaki)

『It is Sajima Nanami!』(Nanami)

“You may enter!” (Tamaki)

『Thank you very much!』(Nanami)

When I removed the key from the door and opened it, Nanami was there in a white dress and saluted with a snap. She was carrying a large bag.

“Nanami… that’s…” (Tamaki)

“That’s right! I brought lunch!” (Nanami)

『Oooh—!』(Daichi, Tamaki)

Mine and Katsuragi’s voices overlapped.

To be frank, Nanami also didn't return home and offered us her cooperation. Right from the start, Nanamin didn't participate in the usual bullying, and after luring him with her boxed lunches, it was easy. She even managed to reach the level of speaking with Katsuragi.

She volunteered to bring lunch every day, and to join in on our practice.

… Speaking of which, us three spend more than half of our time together these days.

"Good morning Yui-chan, today I have light sandwiches and a light salad~." (Nanami)

She took multicolored Tupperware out from the bag where the sandwiches were packed.

Everything seemed to be very delicious. Immediately, Katsuragi held out his hands.

"It's good!" (Daichi)

Where did his tiredness from a moment ago go? Katsuragi filled his mouth with the delicious food.

"It was worth making if you say that." (Nanami)

"Any meal Sajima makes is delicious~." (Daichi)

Without stopping, without stopping.

Saying his impressions, Katsuragi threw them into his mouth one after another. Looking at it, I was a little irritated and pinched his stomach.

"Ow-!? W-what did you do that for, Tamaki!" (Daichi)

“… No reason. Finish eating so that we can resume the practice. Overeating is no good you know? You need to lose weight.” (Tamaki)

“Eh, but, I want to eat…” (Daichi)

“Do you understand me!?” (Tamaki)

“Y-yeah! I got it, I got it!” (Daichi)

Pressured by my atmosphere, Katsuragi nodded his head many times. Nanami smiled and giggled from our exchange.

… Nanami was thoroughly enjoying my reaction.

“E-enough already! Nanami, I’ll get angry!” (Tamaki)

“Sorry, sorry. But you know?” (Nanami)

“What?” (Tamaki)

Nanami clapped once, and answered my question.

“But, teasing Yui-chan… it’s fun.” (Nanami)

“Please stop!? Ah, Katsuragi don’t try to stealthily continue eating!” (Tamaki)

“Damn, so persistent…!” (Daichi)

While having such a conversation, we happily enjoyed lunch and after ten minutes resumed the special training.

… Katsuragi’s schedule from now on will be firm…!

No one could blame me for it.

Chapter 19 - 『*Counterattack*』

The secret rooftop special training that was condensed into two weeks ended.

“… There’s quite a difference, Katsuragi…” (Tamaki)

“Really…” (Nanami)

Nanamin and I looked at the young man in front of us, and gave our honest opinions.

On the last day of winter break, I looked back on how Katsuragi changed… Katsuragi’s outward appearance was different from before.

The difference between the before and after was amazing.

All the same that didn’t mean he changed to the one in Rostalgia. Still, results steadily appeared.

The roundness of his face was gone, and his stomach that had stuck out had withdrawn splendidly. His arms were also covered with muscle and not just fat. Perhaps, because this was a virtual world this could happen.

“Yeah, even I doubt it.” (Katsuragi)

Katsuragi clapped his stomach.

“I didn’t think that I would ever not see my stomach I looked down.” (Daichi)

“It’s the result of your effort.” (Tamaki)

“… That’s right. If there were no results, I’d cry.” (Daichi)

It’s reasonable that Katsuragi would say that. Because I packed Katsuragi’s schedule to the limit.

Running, weight training, and combat practice etc. That menu that seemed tight was made for Katsuragi.

“Well, at any rate I’m looking forward to tomorrow.” (Daichi)

“You might be mistaken for a transfer student.” (Nanami)

“It’s like Nanamin said. I vote you’ll be mistaken for someone else.” (Tamaki)

“I’ll do the same as Yui-chan.” (Nanami)

“Me too… well, I don’t want to become a bet.” (Daichi)

“Isn’t it fine? All of us think that Katsuragi looks different than before.” (Tamaki)

“Thinking about it, it has become somewhat fun.” (Daichi)

“The combat training will become more severe starting tomorrow though.” (Tamaki)

“Huh? That’s interesting? My body suddenly began to hurt all over.” (Daichi)

“Then, I’ll loosen you up. Hey, lend me your arms.” (Tamaki)

I forcibly pulled his arms that he had folded behind his back with all of his strength. I took his hand and pulled so that his elbow straightened out.

“Wai-, Tamaki, that’s dangerous!! It’ll bend!?” (Daichi)

“You two are good friends~.” (Nanami)

“Right?” (Tamaki)

“No, wait! No matter how you look at this it is violen—aaaaah!?” (Daichi)

After that, I loosened Katsuragi’s body until he was weakly collapsing and looked like a mollusk.

“… Damn… my body is screaming everywhere…” (Daichi)

“It’s because it’s bad to say something like that. Other than that, quickly come over here so we can start the strategy meeting.” (Tamaki)

“… Where did you get so much power… Nowadays, a violent heroine isn’t popular.” (Daichi)

“Katsuragi-kun. Did you say something?” (Tamaki)

“Your eyes aren’t smiling! They’re scary! I got it, I’m coming! Hey, Sajima too.” (Daichi)

“Ye~s.” (Nanami)

After joking along with me, Katsuragi, who was receiving a massage from Nanamin—since it was Nanamin who offered it, he couldn’t stop her—came over even though he complained.

… Recently, Katsuragi hasn’t been anxious around Nanamin.

“What is it? Your cheeks are puffed up.” (Daichi)

“… It’s nothing… You’re reading into it too much.” (Tamaki)

I passed the two a piece of paper that had what we would do from now on written on it. It had the role and method they would have in defeating Samejima on it.

"… It's amazing, Tamaki. This is really well done." (Daichi)

"I want Katsuragi to win. You've worked hard." (Tamaki)

"I-is that so… thanks, Tamaki." (Daichi)

"Fufu. Don't worry about it." (Tamamki)

"Wow~, you're so sweet~." (Nanami)

Nanamin used her hand to cover her blushing face, our exchange was being openly expressed.

"Y-you two! Now isn't the time to happily stare at each other like that, this is a strategy meeting!" (Nanami)

We had trouble unlocking our gazes from each other, and as expected Nanamin decided to advance the conversation by pointing it out.

"… Even so it is fine to leave it as it is for a bit longer…" (Tamaki)

"Yui-chan?" (Nanami)

"… No, it's nothing. Well, I'll now tell you what to do starting tomorrow—" (Tamaki)

The opening ceremony. The three of us went to school as we had discussed the day before. Happily, arm in arm.

That said, I was only doing this because Nanamin brought it up. To the bitter end, I did this to rile up Umahara, not because I want to flirt with Katsuragi.

It's definitely not because of that.

"… Nanamin. Stop staring at me with that warm gaze." (Tamaki)

"But, Yui-chan's face has such an amazing smile on it." (Nanami)

"Eh, you're kidding!" (Tamaki)

"Just kidding." (Nanami)

"Nanamin!!" (Tamaki)

"Quiet down you two. We've been the center of attention since a while ago." (Daichi)

We climbed up the stairs while chatting with such a feeling. Without stopping, I took a deep breath, and entered the classroom like normal.

The classroom became silent. However, whispers arose when they saw Katsuragi.

"W-who is that guy…?" (—?

"Tamaki's boyfriend…? But, who is that guy?" (—)

"A transfer student maybe?" (—)

Nanamin desperately tried not to laugh at the misguided guesses while going to her seat. Katsuragi and I went up to the platform. Katsuragi powerfully declared before everyone.

“I… Katsuragi Daichi, am going out with Tamaki Yuina!” (Daichi)

“…. Wha-?” (—)

『Eeeeeeeh!?』

A large chorus of voices from around the classroom arose in surprise. Everyone stopped what they were doing. Only Samejima was glaring. Was it the composure of a strong person?

… Even like that, Katsuragi will definitely defeat you.

—Begin the counterattack.

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Two weeks had passed since the declaration of war. So far the teasing of Katsuragi had quieted down. I think it is because of two things.

First, Katsuragi’s change. His appearance was clearly different than before. Losing his fat, his weak image disappeared. Thanks to that those guys found it hard to start a fight with him. Though, being held back like that would only last a few days.

And so the second reason was his relationship with me and Nanamin.

Since we who belonged to the upper caste in the class stuck to him at all times, they couldn’t pick on him. At least they couldn’t while Nanamin and I were there.

However, this would also have a limit. For that reason, we began. The time was right.

“… I’m a bit nervous.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi wasn't able to calm down, repeatedly opening and closing his hand.

This would be his first serious fight.

"It's alright. Katsuragi won't lose to that guy. Besides, we'll lure Umahara here." (Tamaki)

"You've especially appealed to lure him, right?" (Nanami)

What Nanamin meant was my and Katsuragi's behavior. Being always chatting and often touching in class, calling to each other at lunch and coming here. And furthermore, with Nanamin.

It was truly terrific. Umahara's–our prey's–scorching glare.

"Then, I'll go over it again. First, Nanami will hand this to Umahara." (Tamaki)

I took the fake love letter out of my pocket, and handed it to her.

This time I'll make use of that guy's goodwill towards her.

"It's fine for Yui-chan to say that Katsuragi-kun threatened us right?" (Nanami)

"Yeah. Since he would find it unnecessary to hear more to choose between Katsuragi and Nanamin's credibility." (Tamaki)

That's right. He wouldn't care about reason and would believe that Nanamin was being forced to pretend to accompany him against her will.

What's important is which one he believes.

"However, will he really come?" (Nanami)

“No problem. He has the chance of raising his value in the eyes of the successfully rescued me. And above all, his pride should prevent him from running away.” (Tamaki)

“Yea~h… I still don’t understand that well…” (Nanami)

“I get it. Because he’s a simple man. He wants to look cool in front the girls.” (Daichi)

“Well, since Katsuragi is also a man, don’t worry about it… Well, Katsuragi and I will go to standby at the place Umahara will go to from Nanamin’s love letter.” (Tamaki)

“Then, it’s fine to fight and beat him?” (Daichi)

“Yeah. Simply put, it should be fine there.” (Tamaki)

When we finished reaffirming the strategy, I held out my right arm. The other two guessed my meaning and put their palms on my hand.

“From now on we look to win! For our first victory! Do your best!” (Tamaki)

“Yeah!!” (Daichi)

“Yea-!” (Nanami)

We cheered towards the sky, and it was absorbed by the cloudless blue sky.

On the same rooftop as usual. We were here on standby, waiting for him to arrive to the meeting place written on Nanamin’s letter.

“… Umm, he’s a bit late…” (Daichi)

Looking at his watch, Katsuragi said so.

My pulse beat in my chest as the time for the decisive battle drew closer. I wasn't tense, I was excited.

I predict that Katsuragi was also the same.

I mean, we've been smiling about this since situation a while ago.

The person himself didn't seem to realize it, but Katsuragi was doing warm-up exercises.

"… Ah, a mail…" (Tamaki)

I opened the cellphone I was carrying in my hand that I noticed vibrating.

The sender was Nanamin, saying that Umahara was headed here.

I closed the screen and looked up.

"… He'll be here soon, Katsuragi." (Tamaki)

"… Got it." (Daichi)

When he heard me, Katsuragi began to stretch and bend. He tried to hide his trembling so that I would be find.

… Even so, it was normal for his hands to tremble like that.

"T-Tamaki!?" (Daichi)

Katsuragi rose his voice in surprise.

It was natural. I mean, I was leaning against Katsuragi's back.

"What's the matter?" (Tamaki)

I put my hand on his. Though it was usually cold, right now it was warm. That told me how he felt.

“What’s the matter, is it. You, doing something like that…” (Daichi)

“I mean, Katsuragi is nervous so I think I’ll relax you.” (Tamaki)

“E-even so, wasn’t there another way?” (Daichi)

“I don’t want to be separated from you.” (Tamaki)

“… … … –“ (Daichi)

“Even if you fail here, it’s alright because I will never leave Kasturagi.” (Tamaki)

I didn’t know what Katsuragi was anxiously thinking about. Was he afraid of fighting, or afraid of losing? I’m sure there are other reasons.

That’s why, I wanted to reduce them even if just a little. I want to support him. Genuinely thinking these things, I noticed that I was embracing Katsuragi.

“… What is it. You are a strange person…” (Daichi)

“I don’t mind even if I am weird. As long as I can be with Katsuragi.” (Tamaki)

“… Coming from someone who called a man over using a love letter… good grief.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi put a hand on my head and stroked it a little roughly.

“Thanks. I don’t know, but how many times do I have to say it?” (Daichi)

“You still have a ways to go from now on. Until then, I’ll be in your care.” (Tamaki)

Separating from him, I clapped him on the back.

Katsuragi was unable to respond with words, but I didn’t mind. I mean, he would show me his response from now on.

“Alright! You can do it, Daichi! Your first battle!” (Tamaki)

“Yeah!” (Daichi)

Our counterattack begins now.

Chapter 20 - 『*Performance*』

Speaking of the standard confession at the bottom of the school building, a classroom in the evening, or an unmanned rooftop… I chose the back of the schoolhouse.

“Tamaki!?” (—)

The target had already arrived at the meeting place.

As soon as he say my face, his expression changed. This was expected.

Because right now, I was pretending that I was being trapped by Katsuragi.

“Umahara! Help m-!?” (Tamaki)

In the middle of asking for help, Katsuragi closed my mouth with his hand. He drew me close without changing.

“H-hey! Katsuragi! What are you doing!” (Umahara)

“So noisy, shut up! This person is bad! She double-crossed me!” (Daichi)

“You’ve been making Tamaki keep you company against her will!” (Umahara)

He bellowed.

Blood began to rush to Umahara’s head. I tapped Katsuragi’s knee with the hands held behind my back.

It was the signal to provoke him. Accordingly, Katsuragi spoke.

“If you think that, I dare you to take her! Think you can!?” (Daichi)

“Wha-…” (Umahara)

“It can’t be that you’re saying you’re afraid of me right? Still, I don’t mind. Tamaki will just keep being mine!” (Daichi)

… For a moment, I wondered if he should hit me. I braced myself for such a situation.

“Please! Umahara!” (Tamaki)

Attacking the retreating enemy with a scream, Umahara finally stirred.

“… Damniiit!!” (Umahara)

“Here he comes!” (Daichi)

In order to guarantee my freedom Katsuragi brushed off Umahara’s punch with his arm.

In order to not interfere, I immediately withdrew from there.

Katsuragi confirmed it before letting out a left front kick. It was a critical hit as it hit Umahara’s unguarded side, and though he braced his legs it wasn’t effective and was blown back.

“Ga-ha…!?” (Umahara)

“That’s not all!” (Daichi)

Katsuragi stamped on Umahara who had fallen. Many, many times.

Each and every time the groaning lessened, and was instead replaced with a crying voice.

“S… stop it…” (Umahara)

“You’re noisy. Shut up.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi seized Umahara by the hair, pulling his head up and smacking Umahara’s face with his palm.

“O-ow…!?” (Umahara)

Pashin!

“S-sor-…” (Umahara)

Pashin!

“P-please…” (Umahara)

“Was there a time that you stopped when I asked? None, right? Then you know what’s about to happenDaichi)

This time, Katsuragi made a fist and held it high. Understanding what would be next, Umahara began begging for his life.

“I’m s-sorry! Anything, I’ll do anything! Please stop it! Please!!” (Umahara)

Without caring about me asking for help earlier, he cried and begged regardless of how he looked.

At the least, he didn’t tell me to run away. Therefore my feelings weren’t diminished at all.

… Well, even if he told me to escape, I would stay to record what happened.

“It’s a promise then.” (Tamaki)

I closed the camera feature that was recording since a moment ago. Confirming the folder, it was properly recorded.

“T-Tamaki? W-what are you…” (Umahara)

Umahara was unable to grasp the situation. So I informed him.

“Umahara… the confession. It was a lie.” (Tamaki)

“… … … Eh?” (Umahara)

“I hate you… I just lured your out here.” (Tamaki)

“N-no way…” (Umahara)

His expression turned to one of despair.

His face lost its energy.

“Katsuragi. Don’t let him get away. Because we need him from now on.” (Tamaki)

“Yeah, it was like that.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi cracked his neck with a *Koki*. Umahara’s body trembled. The situation was perfect.

“Then, let’s do the final binding.” (Tamaki)

“Time to break him, huh.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi extended his hand towards Umahara.

Afterwards, we continued until Umahara promised to comply with our instructions.

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We were accompanied by Umahara the next day.

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that coming with us was fated. Because it was a once in a lifetime chance from us.

Today's last class was devoted to assigning the roles of the play.

As committee chairman I listen the students that were candidates on the blackboard in the front.

After the behind-the-scenes roles were filled, we finally started with the starring roles.

"Well, I think we will now decide the actors. First of all, I want to determine who the hero and heroine, who are the axis of the story, are… this time it will be limited to recommendations only. Because this is important. And so, does anyone-?" (Tamaki)

"Yes ye~s" (Shuri)

"Yes, Shuri-chan." (Tamaki)

"I think Samejima-kun would be the best hero after all!" (Shuri)

Shuri-chan still recommends Samejima. It couldn't be helped because I didn't tell her the strategy. Rather, I was grateful that it was moving along as I expected.

"Ah, so, Samejima. Should I count you as a candidate?" (Tamaki)

“Yeah, I don’t mind. Then I recommend Hamakaze as the heroine.” (Samejima)

“Well then, that’s the first two. Is there no one else?” (Tamaki)

I looked around the classroom, but no one else rose their hand. I didn’t want the amount to increase. Otherwise, the fight would not be carried out.

“… Alright. Looks like there isn’t. Then, I’ll recommend one last person.” (Tamaki)

I told everyone such, and forcefully wrote a name on the blackboard. Those behind me became noisy.

I’d gotten used to this.

“My recommendation is Katsuragi Daichi.” (Tamaki)

“Then, I recommend Tamaki Yuina as the heroine.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi gave a response similar to Samejima’s as a form of revenge.

Of course, Samejima flared up.

“Oioi, Tamaki. Are you serious?” (Samejima)

“What do you mean? I recommended Katsuragi because I thought he was suitable.” (Tamaki)

“Such an ugly person should not play the leading part. It’s unpleasant to see an acting pig.” (Samejima)

Laugher suddenly rose up. Nanamin was frowning. When Katsuragi was spoken ill of… her composure broke.

“No, I think when it comes to it a guy with a filthy soul like you would be the unpleasant one. Hey, do you even have a soul?” (Daichi)

Katsuragi stood up from his seat to ridicule Samjima.

“Tormenting someone as a hobby, I don’t think Samejima could do it.” (Daichi) [TN: Samejima’s name in this line was read as “クズ”, or waste/garbage/scrap/etc.]

“… What’s with that. Aren’t you getting cocky?” (Samejima)

“No, it’s nothing like that. However, I wonder which of us is inferior, I’m thinking about some way to let you know.” (Daichi)

“… Letting me know, you say? It’ll be the same as always.” (Samejima)

When Samejima said that, young men in the class stood up one by one. Looking at the situation, Katsuragi smiled.

It worked like a charm.

“Though I don’t mind doing it like this… it’s unfortunate. The peerless Samejima is afraid to have me as his opponent.” (Daichi)

“The fuck are you playing at.” (Samejima)

“So what will you do? Pin me down with everyone? You’re a coward after all. Though I’d never be defeated by pigs like you guys. Right, Sajima?” (Daichi)

“Wha-“ (Samejima)

Samejima was surprised by the unexpected name being called out. Things are going our way.

“That’s right. It’s pathetic to see…” (Nanami)

“… … …-!!” (Samejima)

Samejima’s face blushed with shame from Nanamin’s remark. He clenched his hands. He shoulders were shaking with anger. He pierced Katsuragi with a sharp glare.

“… Alright. Just as you wanted, I alone will be your opponent. I’ll take your provocation…” (Samejima)

“Even though I just said the truth… Well, it’s fine. So? Will we start here?” (Daichi)

“… No, just wait because I’m going to prepare a place for you to die. Don’t think that you’ll ever be able to have something like an enjoyable school life again.” (Samejima) [TN: First sentence wording is awkward… Suggestions?]

“Right back at you.” (Daichi)

“…Tch!” (Samejima)

Samejima clicked his tongue and left the classroom, going somewhere. Probably to reserve the place he declared. He’s the director’s grandson. If it’s something to this degree I’m sure he can get away with it.

My prediction was right, and Samejima returned after a few minutes with the key to the judo hall.

We went to the judo hall. Samejima used his influence to get permission from the teacher and it was now reserved. By his proposal, it was decided that they would fight here.

Katsuragi and Samejima confronted each other in the center. We surrounded it.

Perhaps, that guy also won't come out unhurt this time.

The referees were the spectators.

"… Trash. I never thought in my wildest dreams that you would pick a fight with me." (Samejima)

"Yeah, me neither. I thought I would always continue to yield… but I won't lose here." (Daichi)

"You think you can win?" (Samejima)

"I'll win. Because I won't give up." (Daichi)

Katsuragi smiled as he said that. Samejima didn't like that and gave him a cold glare.

"… It's fine. Bring it on." (Katsuragi)

"… …" (Samejima)

Following his words, Katsuragi kicked the ground.

"Fas-!" (Samejima)

Samejima saw Katsuragi's face coming at him in a straight line and began a horizontal hook. Katsuragi noticed and lowered his posture, sliding so that he wouldn't kill his momentum.

"Hmph-!" (Samejima)

However, Samejima predicted this and jumped, extending his leg to stamp on him.

"Kua-!?" (Daichi)

Though Katsuragi took some damage, he rose and threw down Samejima sideways by seizing his leg.

“Gu-!?” (Samejima)

Samejima’s shoulder struck the ground. Although he let out his voice from the impact, he didn’t lose his calm and escaped from Katsuragi’s restraint.

“… Seriously…” (—)

“Did you see? Those movements…” (—)

“… You’re kidding right?” (—)

Every classmate expressed their impressions. Nanamin and I were smiling broadly.

That was the natural response when shown that much in an instant.

Because Katsuragi had fought against me for a long time, he should be able to see Samejima’s attacks clearly. As long as he doesn’t become frantic and lose his willpower, he won’t lose.

“Uraaah!” (Samejima)

Both of them stood up, though Samejima began his suicide attack first.

“You will kneel down! A guy like you!” (Samejima)

Grabbing his neck, he pivoted and did a one-armed shoulder throw over his back.

“I say the same to you!” (Daichi)

His nails bit into Samejima’s wrist while he was being thrown.

“—!?” (Samejima)

Samejima unconsciously released his grip in the middle of it. Katsuragi’s back hit the floor after being thrown into the air, he properly defended.

“Y-Yui-chan. Is he… okay?” (Nanami)

“He’s fine. How many times do you think I threw him? That defense was first class.” (Tamaki)

I had been throwing him during the combat training sessions. It was to increase his ability to defend. Because if something like this happened, defending would be useful.

Katsuragi also disliked the pain, and memorized defense first.

“So don’t worry. Shouldn’t you be cheering him on?” (Tamaki)

“You’re right. Hang in there, Katsuragi-kun!” (Nanami)

Nanamin was jumping up and down while cheering on Katsuragi. However, the other spectators got used to what was going on and began raising their voices.

“Get him! Samejima!” (—)

“Beat up Katsuragi!” (—)

The fight heated up from the cheers.

“… Don’t lose, Katsuragi!!” (Tamaki)

I was also cheering him on.

Chapter 21 - 『*Confession*』

“You trash!” (Samejima)

“Shut up!” (Daichi)

They grappled each other from the front. The one pushed down—

“What the…!?” (Samejima)

—was Samejima.

“Where did you get so much strength…!” (Samejima)

“Unfortunately for you, my coach is a woman with superhuman strength! I’m not about to lose to you!” (Daichi)

Katsuragi was pressing down on Samejima and forced him to his knees. However, Samejima was determined and started to twisted his arm.

“Damnit-!” (Daichi)

Since there was a possibility of him breaking free of the unskilled attack, Katsuragi was forced to reluctantly abandon his grip.

The two temporarily gained some distance between each other. However, it looks like that wasn’t it. Because of what happened next.

“I won’t stop!” (Samejima)

Samejima immediately regained his footing and closed the distance in one go. Samejima knew karate, but it was a modernized version of karate.

Samejima took a Hanmi stance with his left side and let out a left jab. [TN: Hanmi stance is this]

The left jab was repeated with his right for a one-two.

“Gofu-…!!” (Daichi)

Samejima’s left fist hit. Unexpectedly, Katsuragi seriously began to stumble backwards.

“Katsuragi-kun!” (Nanami)

Nanamin screamed. She crouched down with her hands covering her face. Cheers of victory could be heard from around the judo hall.

Samejima also pulled his right arm back for the next punch. He wore a distorted smile.

Naïve.

Katsuragi’s face was hit with the left jab.

I understood. Katsuragi’s eyes were alive. His eyes were firmly open, waiting for Samejima’s next attack. He was gathering strength.

His aim was to counter.

Samejima released the right straight. Katsuragi took a step forward without avoiding it. He simultaneously let out a right fist.

Katsuragi gained speed before Samejima’s thrust landed on his cheek.

Now it's his turn. Samejima couldn't dodge it. The fist vigorously hit Samejima's face.

"Uburu-!?" (Samejima)

Samejima was blown backwards and flew. The momentum kept him rolling without stopping.

This was the result of that guy's pride. Katsuragi ran up to him like a hunter moving to his prey.

He grabbed his foot, taking away his ability to move and flung him. Samejima was unable to move after taking the blow.

Katsuragi mounted him and began barraging him with his fists.

"Aaaaaaaaaaah!!" (Daichi)

His hands didn't stop.

"Damniiit!" (Daichi)

"Ngu-!" (Samejima)

Samejima was prepared for the barrage. He struck Katsuragi's abdomen and his attack stopped. Samejima used that instant, escaping from Katsuragi.

Though it was now his chance to follow up on Katsuragi, looking at Samejima he was also fatigued.

He took the offense and had the tables turned on him. Therefore, he did this because of his personality.

"You guys! Kill this trash!!" (Samejima)

—thought so.

He ignored the rules. He was planning on making use of his classmates the entire time.

A shame, Samejima.

That was a bad move.

A boy sprung up and jumped at Katsuragi.

However, I kicked him flying while he was on the way.

“… Huh?” (Samejima)

That boy hit his head on the wall, fainted and fell down. I became the deadline before the two people.

“If anyone passes me the same thing will happen to them… though if that’s fine with you feel free to come here?” (Tamaki)

『… … …』(Classmates)

After being shown such a terrible spectacle, no one was foolish enough to step forward.

… No, two people did.

“… Tamaki… You…” (Kijima) [TN: He uses ‘teme’, which is an incredibly offensive ‘you’. Could possibly be ‘fucker’?]

“… …” (Umahara)

It was Kijima and Umahara.

“Oi, what are you doing!!” (Kijima)

“I’m doing what I said. Right now it is a fight between Katsuragi and Samejima. Why would you guys butt in? It’s unnecessary.” (Tamaki)

“Tch-… You think you can stop us?” (Kijima)

Kijima proudly displayed his physical strength. He completely lowered his guard. I smiled at the absurdity.

“I can.” (Tamaki)

“How so?” (Kijima)

“Like this.” (Tamaki)

I rose my arm and snapped my fingers. This was the cue.

The person in question was sure to understand, since I gave him the order properly. Kijima thought that I was preparing something, and looked at me.

Now’s the chance.

“Aaah!” (Umahara)

“Guu-!?” (Kijima)

Umahara’s fist struck Kijima’s face. Kijima probably didn’t expect that.

There was no way that his friend would betray him.

“Wha-!? What are you doing, you guys!! Do what I said!” (Samejima)

The unexpected situation agitated him. The agitation created an opening. And so, I continued talking so that Katsuragi wouldn’t miss the opening.

Squeezing out the last of his strength, he dashed.

“Do you have the time to be looking away?” (Daichi)

“Uu-!?” (Samejima)

Katsuragi broke free of Samejima’s arm and stepped towards his chest. First, he sank his elbow into Samejima’s abdomen.

“Ka-…. Ha-…!” (Samejima)

Samejima’s body bent back and forth. Katsuragi had practiced that technique intently.

To the point where it was a conditioned reflex for his body.

He grabbed his legs.

Samejima’s body turned around.

“Taste it! My pain, my suffering. All of it!!” (Daichi)

Supaan!! I heard a comforting sound.

It was decided.

Samejima couldn’t move because of the hit to his head.

“Haa… haa… haa…!” (Daichi)

The excitement hadn’t settled into Katsuragi.

“Ah… gah…” (Samejima)

Samejima was tenaciously grasping onto Katsuragi's arm even while collapsing. He shook it off easily. He tore off the chains that had always bound him.

"… Sear this into your memory. The view from the very bottom." (Daichi)

Hearing those words, the man who had collapsed fainted.

Everyone acknowledged the victory.

『… … … …』(Classmates)

"Katsuragiii~!!" (Tamaki)

"-! Wait, Tamaki!" (Daichi)

I jumped at Katsuragi who was standing like normal. Even though he said that, he caught me.

"You did it, Katsuragi! You beat Samejima!" (Tamaki)

Saying that fact again caused half of the class to be astonished, though from the other half rose sounds of fear.

"You're kidding…" (—)

"That trash won…" (—)

"Oi, isn't this bad…!" (—)

Those that had nothing to do with us left the judo hall. One after another the classmates left. Finally it was just Katsuragi and I, and the collapsed Samejima… Nanamin was gone, did she take me into consideration?

Silence returned once more. The victor was motionlessly staring at his red hands. He began to tremble a little.

“… Tamaki.” (Daichi)

“Hm? What is it?” (Tamaki)

“… I won, right?” (Daichi)

“… Yeah, you won.” (Tamaki)

“I defeated Samejima?” (Dacihi)

“That’s right. You defeated Samejima with your own hands.” (Tamaki)

“… Suu.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi inhaled deeply.

He let out joy that welled up from the pit of his stomach. It showed in his expression.

“… Is that so…” (Daichi)

“… … …” (Tamaki)

I smiled, looking at Katsuragi’s profile who’s smiling face looked to be about to burst.

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“… I wonder why Katsuragi called me to a place like this…” (Tamaki)

After defeating Samejima, Katsuragi fastened Samejima to a pole to take a photo of his unsightly figure.

The photo of Samejima's scribbled face was magnificent, and I immediately sent it to my friends with my phone. Even now the phone wouldn't stop vibrating.

… Anyways, since a while ago… Katsuragi looked so cool…

I can still picture that perfect shoulder throw. Seeing Katsuragi confronting him without giving up no matter how many times he fell, I thought that his tenacity remained the same.

As I wondered if it was because he didn't cool down from the excitement until later, I didn't notice the person who approached me from behind.

"Tamaki!" (Daichi)

"Hyau!?" (Tamaki)

Something cold touched my cheek and I let out a strange voice. Katsuragi was laughing with abandon after hearing it.

"… You got such a cold juice when it is cold, on purpose?" (Tamaki)

"No, this one's… Kuku… mine, here is… your's… Pupu." (Daichi) [TN: He can't stop laughing LOL]

"D-don't laugh!" (Tamaki)

I took the hot coffee from Katsuragi.

Pushing the tab open, the heat of the slightly bitter coffee streamed through my cold body. After drinking half, Katsuragi began to talk.

"… Hey, Tamaki." (Daichi)

"Hmm?" (Tamaki)

“Today’s event… I didn’t dream it right?” (Daichi)

“Obviously. What foolish thing are you saying?” (Tamaki)

“… Then, from tomorrow onwards… I’m not trash anymore right?” (Daichi)

“From tomorrow on, and up until now, Katsuragi has never been trash. We’ve merely been fools.” (Tamaki)

“… Is that so, someone like that… you. Therefore, to me as well… you…” (Daichi)

The second half was inaudible. I responded with a short “Hmm?” to have him repeat it and he motionlessly stared at me. When our eyes met he looked downward and covered his face with his hands.

“… Ah-, that’s definitely right. It’s no good for me. It’s already impossible.” (Daichi)

“What is?” (Tamaki)

“Even if you hear it you won’t regret it right?” (Daichi)

“Hurry up and say it. You’re a man right?” (Tamaki)

“… That’s right.” (Daichi)

Katsuragi sat up straight and quickly took a deep breath, recently due to the training his body was strong, then stood up and bowed at the waist—and told me words of love.

“I love you, Tamaki. You more than anyone else. Your smile, your tears, I want to monopolize them all. I want to be near you and defend you—I love you.” (Daichi)

“————“ (Tamaki)

Hearing those words, I didn’t understand at first. However, it permeated through my chest. A warm feeling spread through me.

How long have I waited to hear those sweet words? How much did I wish to hear those words?

My heart trembled with delight.

Hot tears flowed from my eyes. No matter how many times I wiped them away, I was unable to stop.

I knew it.

I love Katsuragi.

Love him more than anyone else.

Above all these feeling were proof. I couldn’t contain them. They burst from my chest.

I’d never conveyed these feelings.

In that case, I’ll tell him.

My beloved person was becoming flustered in front of me.

I was embracing Katsuragi with all of my strength.

“Uwa-“ (Daichi)

Katsuragi was unable to support himself from the sudden impact, and without change we fell.

His lips were defenseless.

“T-Tama—“ (Daichi)

“—Nnn.” (Tamaki)

I put my lips on his.

My second kiss with him. I was aware of my feelings this time.

… Ah. Kissing like this made me so happy…

Eventually, I slowly separated from him.

Then, I also confessed to him.

“I love you, Katsuragi～… I have… always loved you…!!” (Tamaki)

Tears began flowing again. Katsuragi embraced me and brought my head to his chest.

“… Ah… snow…” (Daichi)

Calmly, Katsuragi muttered so. I felt a pleasant cool feeling on my cheek.

Snow fell for the first time for this year.

As though it were blessing us.

Chapter 22 - 『*Bride*』

“Uwa-!?” (Tamaki)

That moment’s events went way too quick and I was dropped to the ground.

“Oww…” (Tamaki)

While rubbing the spot that hit, I looked around. A familiar place.

… Yeah, this is the【Scorching Execution Ground】.

But, I wonder why I’m here?

I’m sure that I was with Katsuragi just now… that is, I was h-hugging him…

It’s natural that I’d be confused from being swiftly and painfully dropped into a dark place.

… Oh, I wonder if it’s because I cleared the trial?

As expected, as though if to say that was the correct answer, the game master appeared.

“Congratulations, Shield. You are the first person to succeed.” (Lily)

She clapped her hands with a *PachiPachi*. Thinking about the silence, Leadred-san wasn’t there.

“Akina isn’t here. We are still in the Labyrinth Corridor.” (Lily)

“… Lily can read minds?” (Tamaki)

“I dare say anyone could guess that after you looked around that much. Other than that, are you prepared?” (Lily)

“Ready? For what?” (Tamaki)

“Surely you didn’t forget…?” (Lily)

Lily was amazed and shrugged, sighing.

Hmm? What is it?

My clothes were… peculiar for an adventurer. My bag also returned… oh.

“That’s right… the second trial.” (Tamaki)

“You remembered? Well, it might have been inevitable after devoting yourself with all of your might to that man from the beginning.” (Lily)

… Though it was embarrassing, Lily pointed it out. I was desperate to have Katsuragi win against Samejima. I was so immersed in the academy that I started to forget it was the first trial.

“… Well, it’s fine. Let’s start. I’m eager.” (Lily)

Lily put her right fist in front of her chest, and her left fist in a straight line above her chin. The left half of her body had protectors attached to the arm and leg.

“… The clear conditions?” (Tamaki)

“Defeat me. That’s all.” (Lily)

“I see, I see. In that case—I’m starting.” (Tamaki)

I struck my palm and used magic.

“Frozen Earth!” (Tamaki)

The ground began freezing in a circle centered on my hand. The surface transformed into a snowy landscape. Of course, everything touching the ground was affected as well. Lily was being gnawed at from her feet.

“… Fufu, such a lovely magic.” (Lily)

“… What did you say?” (Tamaki)

“Did you think my movement would be sealed with such a small amount of ice? If that’s the case what you just did is nonsense… You do know what kind of dungeon boss I am, right?” (Lily)

After saying so, Lily sucked in a big breath. She then let out something that was not breath.

It was a flame.

“Flamethrower!!” (Lily)

A flame of high temperature sprayed from her mouth and melted my ice. In the blink of an eye the snowy landscape transformed into a brutal one.

Ah, that’s right… Lily was a user of fire magic.

Right, because she’s the—

“Scorching Execution Ground’s… boss…” (Tamaki)

In other words, the professional of fire magic.

“Fufu. How will you defeat me?” (Lily)

—My attacks won't reach her.

What do I do? Defeat her without magic?

I don't know about that… but, I have to try.

I confirmed the amount of knifes in my pocket by touch.

"Oh, are you wavering?" (Lily)

"No… oh yeah. I actually have a question?" (Tamaki)

"What is it? Say it. I'll answer. A prize for being the first to arrive." (Lily)

"Thank you. Do the events in the Labyrinth Corridor affect the real body?" (Tamaki)

"Are you afraid of being injured?" (Lily)

"No, well, maybe. I am a girl you know." (Tamaki)

I rubbed my white skin. Lily wore a disappointed expression and let out a "Haa" before telling me.

"You're thinking about such a hopeful thing?" (Lily)

"In other words, it does affect it then." (Tamaki)

"This is the second trial. With no sense of urgency the meaning would be weakened. Geez, do you think you're fit to be the hero's wife like that?" (Lily)

"W-wife… I mean, I do love Katsuragi, but still, for that I have to go step by step from being lovers…" (Tamaki)

“… You are… innocent huh…” (Lily)

“S-shut up! Let’s quickly continue! Come on!” (Tamaki)

“It’s fine. Come at me.” (Lily)

Once again Lily and I took a stance. She had an unchanging warlike style.

“I won’t hesitate!” (Tamaki)

I threw three knifes from under my feet.

I want to damage her before it becomes hand-to-hand combat against her murderous physical strength!

“Icy Wind!” (Tamaki)

The icy wind applied to the knife, making it larger with ice.

Lily lightly waved her arm, that action was plenty to stop them!

“Multi Guard!” (Tamaki)

I used the chance to make ice shields on four sides in the same manner as Katsuragi had done.

“Crash!!” (Tamaki)

“Blazing Fist Dance!” (Lily)

“Tch-!” (Tamaki)

Flames flared up from her feet and were flickering, easily melting the ice shields. The bad affinity was making me have poor prospects in this fight.

I used Lily’s pause to dive into a sufficient distance between us.

“Like an insect flying into the fire! Blazing Fist Collect!” (Lily)

“Triple Guard!” (Tamaki)

“Something like that will not stop me!” (Lily)

The ice shield was constructed was cleanly shattered into small pieces, and the pyro fist struck my abdomen.

“Gah-…!” (Tamaki)

I was blown away and slammed into the wall.

There was a throbbing dull pain. Did a bone break?

As it was, it was bad.

There was a difference in both magic and physical ability. There was no way to win with conditions like that.

I hurriedly took a potion out of the bag and drank it.

With this the wound would heal—I had such a hopeful thought.

“… The pain… isn’t fading?” (Tamaki)

The pain I felt all over didn’t go away.

Was the amount not enough? I drank all of the recovery medicine I brought.

There was no effect… …

Why? Although I would have been able to understand it if I could calm down, since I was driven into a corner I couldn’t think calmly.

To make up for that, Lily told me.

“Obviously, neither potions nor elixirs have no meaning in this place. Otherwise, you would have an overwhelming advantage.” (Lily)

“Something like that…” (Tamaki)

However, this was completely my mistake. I was convinced that I would be able to use a potion at my own convenience.

This caused my chances of winning to fall significantly.

“Now then, it’s not time to be overwhelmed! This comes next!” (Lily)

Lily turned her palm towards here and chanted an incantation.

“Cover with hellfire, consume, and burn away their sin. Pillar of Hellfire!” (Lily)

“–! Ice Membrane!” (Tamaki)

Sensing the danger to my life, I wrapped my entire body with a spherical membrane of ice. At that instant, a flame grew overhead.

It was a flame of hell that would certainly execute a sinner.

“Uwaaah!!” (Tamaki)

I focused on pouring all of my magic into it so that I wouldn’t be burned. Even so, the high temperatures from being trapped inside caused my consciousness to dim.

The flames had ceased just as my magic was about to run out. I fell to my knees, and collapsed.

“Hoh, you endured it?… Though I say that, you’re at death’s door.” (Lily)

“Haa… haa…” (Tamaki)

I couldn’t return even a single word at the provocation. I was trapped.

… What can I do? How can I make it through this situation?

I thought desperately. My mind was working.

Katsuragi didn’t give up from any kind of situation.

I need your help… Katsuragi…!

When I thought that, the metal ring on my finger caught my eye.

… … … Oh.

I had goosebumps. My thoughts exploded. The path to victory was being paved.

How did I forget something like this? Something so important.

Move… with this I can win.

“… Saving me again, Katsuragi…” (Tamaki)

Standing up, I chanted to invoke the key to the memento from the person I love.

“For those who die for their lord. Soul transfer. Ring of Death.” (Tamaki)

With the effect activated, the shined a bluish-white. Magic poured from it into my body.

Whose power was this? It went without saying.

“What… did you do?” (Lily)

Lily sensed the increase in my magic and sharpened her vigilance.

Since I wouldn't be able to hide it, I told her the secret.

"This is the Ring of Death. One of the pair is the lord, the other the slave—" (Tamaki)

"I know that! However, something like that, why do you hold the Lord's Ring!?" (Lily)

The Ring of Death. The effects of the Lord's Ring and the Slave's Ring are different when invoked.

The Lord's Ring takes away all of the magic of the one who wears the Slave's Ring when invoked.

Taking away all of the magic means that the slave will faint.

This was made for the purpose of being used in the dungeon. It's like saying that the person who was the slave would die when it is used.

Therefore, Lily was surprised.

"Why, you say… because Katsuragi gave this to me. Besides, that guy can't die." (Tamaki)

"That's why I'm saying, what are you doing with it!? You're the wife!" (Lily)

"A woman supporting her man is an old trend you know. Now, we support each other." (Tamaki)

I readied my knife.

It wasn't a mistake.

I’m taking a risk from here.

Because I have an opportunity to seal her after turning the tables with this winning hand.

However, I don’t have a choice.

I wasn’t allowed to escape. Above all, I wouldn’t forgive myself if I did.

I won’t hesitate. I will accomplish this.

“—Hero’s Bride, I won’t underestimate you.” (Lily)

I will use every possible means to defeat her!

Chapter 23 - 『*Shield*』

“Orah oraah!” (Lily)

Lily bombarded me with fireballs one after another.

I continued to desperately dodge them.

“Where did that power from a moment ago go!?” (Lily)

“Leave me alone! This is part of my strategy!” (Tamaki)

Using magic would be a waste. I can somehow avoid this level of attack.

“Even if you say that…” (Lily)

There was a group of three fireballs. I dived and rolled forward. The balls I left behind struck the wall and exploded.

“As expected, I have to attack too!” (Tamaki)

I took out knives and threw them. This time they would head to the left and right of Lily. I jumped to follow them.

“Phew-!” (Lily)

Lily deftly took care of the knives with her hands. During that, I drew close and drove my fist into her abdomen. Additionally, I fired off magic.

“Saying you could avoiding it at this range would be unreasonable. Ice Lance!” (Tamaki)

A spear of ice manifested from my hand and pierced through Lily's waist—I thought.

However, she didn't even have a scratch. No way… she melted it?

"Oi oi, it's dangerous to contemplate in the middle of combat you know? Moreover leaving an opening like this!" (Lily)

She swung her thick muscles from overhead. I immediately crossed my arms in order to defend and went to my knees. It was an explosive front kick.

"Kya-!?" (Tamaki)

Abandoning myself to flying, welling up with nausea, I desperately raised my arms to endure it. At that instant, I brought back the attached knife that had dropped near Lily.

On the way, it stopped at and entangled with the obstacle. [TN: Obstacle read as 'Lily'.]

"Mu-!?" (Lily)

"Icy Wind!" (Tamaki)

Revolving once in the air, the transparent thread that connected the knife to my hand caused it to fly through the ice and bite into Lily's body, doing some minor damage.

"Hmph… thread, was it? Well, something to that degree just itches. If you want to seal my movements, you're going to have to give it a bit more strength." (Lily)

It seemed that it turned out the same as the Ice Spear earlier.

Though I wanted to save it for a little bit longer… it's not going too well.

"… Now then, it's my turn next. Fireball." (Lily)

A fireball appeared in her hands when she spoke.

"… Still trying to hit me?" (Tamaki)

"Yeah. Though, it'll be somewhat different this time. You know, something like this." (Lily)

She hit two fireballs together. They absorbed into each other, becoming one large fireball.

"Fireball."

She repeated the process again. It became slightly larger. Lily repeated it. Eventually it grew half her body in size.

The heat reached me from there.

"Next will be with this ball. You should run." (Lily)

The huge fireball launched from her strong arm. I immediately flew backwards from the blast when it came into contact with the ground.

"It's not over yet!" (Lily)

"Triple Guard!" (Tamaki)

I hurriedly put up an ice shield, but it took away control of my body and I wasn't able to avoid it completely.

"Ah-…!" (Tamaki)

“Watch out! Here’s another big one!” (Lily)

Before I knew it she attacked with a gigantic fireball she made. I chanted to make another triple ice shield to stop the blow. However, it wasn’t stopping the force of the attack. The fire was also melting the ice.

Meanwhile, she was beginning to chant another magic.

“Emperor of Flame. Thou, burn those that hinder this one’s noble path.” (Lily)

“-!?” (Tamaki)

This is bad. Getting hit by an Emperor-class spell is very bad. I can’t let her finish that spell no matter what.

However, the approaching fireball won’t let me do that.

“Scream, evil inferior species. Become food for the blackened scorched earth.” (Lily)

“Aah!” (Tamaki)

The fireball finally disappeared.

Lowering my waist to get a better view, I saw Lily draw back her arm. A scorching flame was coiled around her arm.

Sensing what the significance of her posture, I immediately enclosed myself in a layer of ice.

“—Chaos Spiral.” (Lily)

Emperor-class magic was shot out from her extended fist.

It was a masterpiece.

The hellfire could extremely easily break through the bulwark and burn me to death.

Although I invoked the ice magic several more times, even that was practically meaningless.

“Ah… …” (Tamaki)

Barely making it through hell, I could do nothing but collapse. I didn’t even have the power to stand up.

Looking at my left arm, it was burned until it became brittle like black charcoal. Already, the blood had disappeared. I couldn’t feel any pain either.

As a small mercy, my right arm could barely move. Seeing that, I smiled.

“What is it, that smile. It’s unpleasant.” (Lily)

“… N-nothing. It’s just that I wish I could have been more useful…” (Tamaki)

I was unable to speak clearly. Like this, I may not be able to chant magic well.

Lily noticed it and sighed.

“… Looks like you are out of tricks. Well then, shall we put an end to this?” Lily)

There was a thunderous roaring sound as Lily’s magic caused flames to wrap around her body. The power was concentrated, moving to her arms.

“No… it’s not over yet…” (Tamaki)

Little by little I turned my quivering finger towards Lily. She probably thought that it was useless struggling. She sighed.

Lily took a step, then another towards me. Flames coiled around her arms in a spiral like from the magic earlier.

If she fires it, it'll be game over.

I don't want that.

Therefore, therefore, I—

"… Bang." (Tamaki)

—shot an『Ice Bullet』at Lily's chest from my finger.

"Kaha-…!?" (Lily)

The flame disappeared into a mist with her concentration was cut, replaced with bright red blood scattering out instead.

I've been hiding it until now.

I believed that I would without fail have a chance at some point and didn't use『Chant Substitution』. When I obtained it on that floor I set the trigger to invoke『Ice Bullet』to the action of『Shooting a gun』.

Because I thought that it wouldn't be possible to win the first bout by fighting normally, I didn't dare to use it.

Because Lily would be vigilant if I used it, I wagered on that.

I won the bet.

"Y-you… the heck was that!?" (Lily)

Lily's blood was pooling at her feet. Red liquid endlessly overflowed from the empty gaping hole.

"I have no obligation to tell you!" (Tamaki)

Stand up! Run through it! My legs!

For the sake of being next to that idiot, I can't afford to be defeated by someone like that with only this much difference in power!

"Ya-!" (Tamaki)

I threw the knife that was in my clothes. After that I formed the shape of a gun with my fingers and repeatedly shot it. Ice Bullets were shot.

"Not yet…!" (Tamaki)

The Ice Bullets followed the Knife so she couldn't stop them. They dug into her shoulders and legs. [TN: One bullet per area. Not sure how to say that, sorry.]

"Guh…! No way, are you using THAT!?" (Lily)

"Now, to top it off! Frozen Earth!" (Tamaki)

I filled the distance between us while taking something out of the pouch by once more covering the floor in ice with『Frozen Earth』to seal her movements.

"Kuh! I'm telling you that that trick won't work on me!" (Lily)

Lily opened her mouth wide and moved her chest to take a breath, she was trying to breath fire.

"Flamethr—" (Lily)

“I won’t let you!!” (Tamaki)

“—Gah-!?” (Lily)

In one go, I kicked the ground and ran at her with all my strength while clenching my teeth to endure the pain.

I had predicted how she would use『Flamethrower』to react to『Frozen Earth』and made use of what was in my right hand, forcing it into her wide open mouth.

“Gopu-!?” (Lily)

“Thoroughly savor it!” (Tamaki)

I hit her chin from below with my palm. She crunched everything inside her mouth.

Since there’s no way it’s durability would stand her human beast fangs, it easily passed into her throat in small pieces.

“W-what did you!?” (Lily)

“… I put this into your mouth.” (Tamaki)

I took out the goods that were in the pouch and showed them to Lily.

Knowing what she had eaten, her face paled. Because, it was something that was enough to endanger her life.

“T-that’s… Crystal Stone!?” (Lily)

As one would expect she was flustered from the effect of improperly using the Crystal Stone.

“Yeah. Furthermore, Fantra prepared it. That guy was one of the Six Demon Generals like you.” (Tamaki)

“Fantra… is it? Y-you defeated him!?” (Lily)

“Finished him off… that’s right. I don’t know after that… well, here’s the question.” (Tamaki)

I put away the Crystal Stone, raised my index finger and forcibly started to act like a quiz show host.

I forgot the pain in my throat from the excitement.

“Magic that the body cannot withstand has been poured into it. What happens to that body? The answer please, Lily!” (Tamaki)

I confidently laughed in my victory. Now I’ll surely have a horrible smiling face that wouldn’t lose to Katsuragi’s.

However, that’s not bad.

“… They’ll explode.” (Lily)

“Correct!” (Tamaki)

As I said that, I moved to a far distance away from Lily.

“… My loss?” (Lily)

Her amount of magic was large from the start. She didn’t explode immediately, and she bit her lip in vexation. However, she also looked glad.

“Sorry, since I can’t lose here.” (Tamaki)

“Don’t worry about it… Oh, one more thing. Will you listen?” (Lily)

“What is it? I’ll answer as a reward from earlier.” (Tamaki)

“Is your reason to follow Hero-sama『Because I love him』?” (Lily)

Lily’s question relieved me. The tension melted, and I smiled slightly.

“Yeah, that’s right. I love Katsuragi. Though, there’s one more reason.” (Tamaki)

It’s something that Katsuragi calls me on a regular basis. A role that only I can do.

Although I’m sure that idiot doesn’t mean it, I know.

I do what I want, go the way I wish.

Because I—

“Because I am the shield that protects him.” (Tamaki)

And so, smiling, I threw out my chest in pride and answered.

Story 3 - Another 1 - 『*Nanamin Religion*』

Daichi: “Err, good morning. Good day, good evening.”

Shuri: “Thank you for waiting. I think I’ll announce the results from the『Epic Tale of the Forsaken Hero Popularity Contest』!”

Shield: “This time we have Katsuragi and Shuri-chan, with me, Tamaki Yuina, as the coordinator. Nice to meet you.”

“It seems we’ve gathered 1,000 votes in total.”

“That’s right! Moreover, there is the possibility that we could have gotten more votes but the limit was set to 1,000 votes and the poll was stopped midway!”

“Endless thanks to the readers. Thank you very much.”

“Well then, shall we immediately move on to the announcement?”

“I’d like to mention that the first place has a brief story. Whose hands hold the glory of first place!? Well then, let’s see!”

“First of all will be 10th to 6th!”

==========

9th

• Samejima 2 votes 0.2%
• Fantra Angas 2 votes 0.2%
• Lily Shuraham 2 votes 0.2%
• Claria 2 votes 0.2%

8th

• Kijima 3 votes 0.3%

7th

• Messiah 11 votes 1.1%

6th

– Akina Leadred 39 votes 3.9%

==========

"… The first one seems like a typo, I wonder about the others?"

"10th place was omitted because it had 0 votes. Originally, it couldn't be helped because the amount of choices were low."

"There's the name that all readers to have forgotten. Like Kijima, or Kijima, or Kijima."

"Though it's only one person… I don't know why Messiah got less votes than Leadred-san."

"Her sleeping face is so pretty~."

“Perhaps it was affected by how much she loves fighting. Saying that, it’s probably a perfectly normal spot for a main character.”

“However, the person in question worried about it considerably. She’s thought more on it. See, look over there.”

“Hmm? … There’s a Maid-san sitting on the floor holding her knees…”

“Eh? Are you depressed?”

“… At any rate, I am a muscle brain woman who loves fighting. Although I love fighting, maid clothes? I’m wearing maid clothes… Obviously I’d be incredibly embarrassed for getting used to the frills, baka.” (Leadred)

“I-I haven’t seen her do something like rapidly mutter idle complaints before…”

“P-pulling myself together for the next ones, 5th and 4th place~!”

==========

5th

• Katsuragi Daichi 43 votes 4.3%

4th

• Hayase Fuuko 47 votes 4.7%

==========

“… Oh? Am I imagining it? I wonder why Katsuragi-kun’s name is in a place like this?”

“… Shuri-chan? For the time being, can you put your hands down? It’s dangerous. It was the voters.”

“That’s right, Shuri. Usually, a man can’t take first place in this kind of a popularity contest.”

“Then, first place is…”

“By the way, first place has been snatched by a heroine.”

“I-in other words, it’s very likely that I’ve gotten first place…!”

“Something like that. So, don’t act rashly, Shuri.”

“Y-yeah! Thanks, Katsuragi-kun!”

“Oh, they’ve started flirting again… I’ve had enough. Back to the story, the fourth place spot went to the one who, like me, joined the group midway through: Hayase-san.”

“Hayase-san’s image changed to cute in one go, don’t you think?”

“It’s hard to believe. A typical ‘before and after’ situation. She’s become really cute. It’s a pity she’s not here.”

“Hayase-san will probably feel happy from just those words. Come on, we’re wasting time, shall we go to the next one?”

“Reasonably, won’t it be Yui-chan?”

“… W-who knows? I-I don’t. IThat aside, why don’t I start from first place from here?”

“Hmm? What’s the matter, Shield?”

“No… I mean. Here, look.”

“Hmm?… … Ah.”

“Something like that. You realize?”

“B-but, can we afford to do something like that? I mean, isn’t it suspicious to abruptly change the order?”

“… I’ve prepared myself.”

“Don’t worry about it. No one will die.”

“I hope so… Then, let’s announce it! 3rd place!!”

==========

3rd

• Hamakaze Shuri 146 votes 14.6%

==========

“Ah, I remembered that I have something to do, so excuse me for a bit.”

“P-please calm down, Shuri! Stoppu! Stoppu!” [TN: Stop is in English.]

“Ridiculous! I won’t forgive these results!”

“Yeah, but, isn’t the thing you are holding clearly unnecessary for going out!?”

“Katsuragi-kun, let go! Let me go~!!”

※Please wait for a while until Hamakaze Shuri settles down.

“T-third place… Even though I’m a heroine… even though I’ve been here since the start…”

“Sh-Shuri-chan has a face that she can’t show to anyone on… K-Katsuragi. Do somethi-“

“Y-yeah. Since Shuri is first place for me, don’t worry about getting third place in the popularity poll.”

“It’s no good!! If I’m not first…”

“If you’re not first…?”

“If I’m not first… how can I openly do this or that with Katsuragi-kun!?”

“Well, next, let’s go, next.”

“Tamaki is cold and doesn’t think about her best friend…”

“Recently, the touchy scenes Katsuragi-kun have decreased… it’s so cruel!”

“… Don’t you guys act cozy enough every day?”

“Not enough!”

“… Then, to get 1st place in the next popularity poll (I’m not saying we’ll do one), you have to crate a better image of yourself. So, will you say those words?”

“Eh… do that…?”

“Do it~. I also want to see that. It’s cute.”

“R-really?”

“Yeah. I think everyone notices Shuri’s charm too.”

“I-is that so… Then, I’ll work hard… Let’s go…!”

“Li~ghty!”

※With my smartphone, Shuri changed into Light Shuri.
==========

2nd

• Tamaki Yuina (shield) 331 votes 33.1%

==========

“Yes! I, Tamaki Yuina, got second place!”

“… Huh? Shuri? She disappeared…”

“It’s all right. I’m sure she’s nearby. Apart from that… don’t you have any words of congratulations?”

“Well, that’s… Congratulations.”

“… That’s it? Don’t you want to tease me?”

“Ku-… come here.”

“Ye~s. Ah, though hugging Katsuragi is regrettable, it’s unavoidable~. After all, I have to atone~.”

“… You’re not fooling anyone with that smile on, Tamaki.”

“… Ehehe.”

“Don’t charm me with that face and announce first place.”

“Ah! Yui-chan, you’re crafty!!”

“Ah-, she revived.”

“Yui-chan’s flirting time is over! Next, the last one! Let’s go!”

“Shuri-chan is stingy.”

“Well well… However, who is above us…?

“Well? Does Yui-chan know?”

“Nope. I haven’t seen 1st place yet because it was on a separate piece of paper.”

“Well, let’s look together then?”

“That’s right. Yeah! Well then, Yui-chan, let’s go~!”

“I know, don’t rush. Well, the first place winner of the first『Epic Tale of the Forsaken Hero Popularity Contest』is… …!!”

==========

1st

• Sajima Nanami 372 votes 37.2%

==========

“”“WHAT-!?”””

Chapter 24 - 『*Foolish*』

"… … -" (Shuri)

Still being assaulted by that strange feeling, I saw Oginomiya Academy before I knew it.

The scene in front of me hadn't changed since last time.

I took a deep breath because if I didn't do it this way I'd repeat the same mistake.

… This Katsuragi-kun is a fake. There is no reason to save him. The real Katsuragi-kun has already felt more pain than this.

That is what I told myself.

"… Nanamin." (Shuri)

"What's the matter? Shuri-chan?" (Nanami)

I gaze down at the floor like the person next to me and quietly murmur into Nanamin's ears.

She's the person I trust the most. Though the Yui-chan of 'now' likes Katsuragi-kun, the Yui-chan of 'here' has not yet been included as an ally.

On that topic, I know that Nanamin never wanted to bully him.

"… Hey, do you want to leave? I kind of feel…" (Shuri)

“Yeah. I’ve been fed up of this too. Let’s go.” (Nanami)

As I thought, Nanamin agreed. She immediately put her wisdom into action.

“Yui-chan, Yui-chan.” (Nanami)

“Hmm? What is it, Nanamin?” (Tamaki)

“For Shuri-chan, today is ‘that’ day… since she’s feeling sick I’m going to bring her to the infirmary.” (Nanami)

“Ah, okay, I got it. Couldn’t you go to the dorms? Since it’s already after school.” (Tamaki)

“Thanks. Well, she decided to return after a short break. Shuri-chan, do you have your bag?” (Nanami)

“Y…yeah.” (Shuri)

I handed my bag to Nanamin and walked with an unsteady gait to pretend that my physical condition was bad. Nanamin accompanied me and patted my back.

“I wonder… if it’s okay now?” (Nanami)

“… Yeah. Let’s go down the stairs and leave the academy to return to the dorms. And… I want to talk about this a bit…” (Shuri)

“I don’t mind. Let me change my clothes, then I’ll head there.” (Nanami)

“Thanks, Nanamin… Let’s keep this act up until the school gate, please.” (Shuri)

“Yes ye~s.” (Nanami)

Nanami's answer dragged on. She seemed to be refreshed from being able to escape that place.

Me abandoning Katsuragi-kun… pained my heart.

I could endure it by thinking about the future. It's something that I had to do.

"… Wait for me, Katsuragi-kun. I will definitely save you." (Shuri)

◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆

"Here, Nanamin. Juice." (Shuri)

"Thanks. Itadakune." (Nanami) [TN: Shortened 'itadakimasu' + feminine ending particle. Not sure how to put that in English.]

Nanami was on top of a cushion, I was sitting on my bed with a mouthful of apple juice.

Though you'd expect some juice to flow onto my chest, something like that obviously didn't happen.

I emptied the cup immediately, cutting to the main subject.

"Nanamin, please listen." (Shuri)

"Hmm? Wha~t?" (Nanami)

"Katsuragi-kun and I, I want to go out with him. I want you to cooperate with me." (Shuri)

I bowed as I requested her.

"… E-eh!? W-what's wrong, Shuri-chan? I, what's with…" (Nanami)

As I guessed, Nanamin was in a state of panic. However, she already seemed to calm down from taking a deep breath.

“A-anyway, raise your head. There’s a strange tension like this…” (Nanami)

“S-sorry. Again, to speak seriously, I thought I would ask like this.” (Shuri)

Lifting my head after Nanamin asked, she had on a kind of complicated expression.

“… Though it might be impolite to ask Shuri-chan something like this…” (Nanami)

“W-what is it?” (Shuri)

“It’s… why do you suddenly want to become Katsuragi-kun’s lover… I thought…” (Nanamin)

“… … I like him, that’s all.” (Shuri)

I answered Nanamin’s extremely natural question.

“Katsuragi-kun has… a strong heart, a gentle personality and, and…” (Shuri)

“Y-yeah, I already understand so it’s okay, Shuri-chan.” (Nanami)

“I-is that so?” (Shuri)

“Yes yes. I truly understand. Because I understand… I’ll help you.” (Nanami)

Nanamin put her hand on my shoulder with a *Pon*, giving me a sweet wink.

“R-really!? Really Nanami, you’ll help me?” (Shuri)

“I wouldn’t lie… However, I have one condition.” (Nanami)

“W-what? I’ll do whatever I can.” (Shuri)

“C-could you please not stick to me like that? I’ll definitely help you with your love, Shuri-chan, but that’s only for coming up with plans and the like, you have to do the important thing by yourself, without my help. Alright?” (Nanami)

“Important thing?” (Shuri)

“Yeah, the important thing. Since I’m not going to tell you what it is, think about it by yourself.” (Nanami)

“No way~, Nanamin. Even I understand that much.” (Shuri)

What Nanamin was talking about was definitely the confession. Nanamin was saying for me to tell him my feelings myself.

… It’s alright. Since I’ve already confessed to Katsuragi-kun many times. I think I can tell him from my own mouth.

“Alright, in that case there’s no problem! Now to make Katsuragi-kun fall madly in love with Shuri-chan!” (Nanami)

“M-madly in love you say… No, that’s right… I wonder what I should do?” (Shuri)

“Mmm… First of all, since it’s indispensable to increase his favorable impression of you, you should keep talking to him every day, shouldn’t you? Since if you are too rash, even Katsuragi-kun may find it suspicious. After that—“ (Nanami)

“W-wait a sec! Let me get my notepad!” (Shuri)

Hitting the brakes on Nanamin's strategies that she was thinking up one after another, I took my notebook out of my desk and began to write in it.

Before I knew it my first strategy meeting with Nanamin continued until the next day.

"Katsuragi-kun!" (Shuri)

"… … …" (Daichi)

It would be meaningless to not talk to him. Therefore it is important to keep talking, even if I'm ignored it's important to persevere and speak.

That was Nanamin's opinion.

I also agree with it. I think conversation is the best method to communicate.

While at it, I was worrying about Yui-chan; the classroom became noisy, but right now I'm not concerned about it.

I wanted to talk with Katsuragi-kun and laugh with him. I also want him to come to like me.

While at school, I wholeheartedly used all possible time to be in contact with Katsuragi-kun.

As a result from that, after one week, Katsuragi-kun finally gave me a reply.

At that time of joy, I almost cried.

Though having a conversation with him may be far off, I'm sure that day will come if I continue to keep him company.

There was also less bullying from Samejima because I wanted to talk with Katsuragi-kun.

I think Nanamin had something to do with it. I'm really thankful.

Longer than a month after that, I finally decided to confess.

The trigger was『Yui-chan passed the first trial』. A few days ago Lily's congratulatory voice passed on that information. Of course, it seems Hayase-san was informed as well.

I was impatient. The way things were going, Yui-chan would be the first to clear it.

I don't want something like that. I'm the one that will be next to him.

The blessing in disguise was that since I properly conversed with Katsuragi-kun, there's some extent of affection.

Perhaps Yui-chan also did the same as I am doing to Katsuragi-kun and was given an OK in response. If she was successful after having a worse impression than me, I should succeed as well.

I was enthusiastic, and finally called Katsuragi-kun to the roof.

And now, Katsuragi-kun was standing in front of me.

Now, I told him my feelings.

"I like you! Please go out with me…!" (Shuri)

Contrary to what I thought, I wasn't nervous about telling him how I felt.

Maybe it was because I had told Katsuragi-kun how I felt many times.

"… … …" (Daichi)

Katsuragi-kun stared and didn't say anything.

However, his face distorted little by little. There was no joy, I understood that.

"… Stop bullshitting me…" (Daichi)

He was angry. Right then, anger was spreading across Katsuragi-kun's chest.

He looked at me with hostility. His sharp glare pierced through me.

However, in that moment Katsuragi-kun calmed himself down, taking short breaths.

During that time, I couldn't move an inch.

"… I won't go out with you. I don't like you, and I don't want to." (Daichi)

The response was an obvious rejection.

It echoed through my head, taking a considerable amount of time for me to digest the contents. Still, I didn't give up. My throat was stuck.

"Katsurag-kun. It's… could you tell me why you turned me down?" (Shuri)

I was conceited from talking with him a little. I misunderstood when he came to talk with me a little.

I thought that if I told Katsuragi-kun how I felt, he would surely understand.

I was also pampered, being called cute from those around me and being conceited.

Still, I inferred it from Yui-chan's results from the trial.

And yet, everything was cut in two. I worked hard to smile, giving Samejima's group cold eyes when they looked for Katsuragi-kun.

"… You don't even know something like that." (Daichi)

His facial expression stiffened. His sharply narrowed eyes pierced through me.

"Why, you ask… Unless you understand the reason, it's impossible for me to be around you." (Daichi)

"… …" (Shuri)

"Okay, listen… Imagine a man who has oppressed you up to now says『Go out with me』. I haven't even gotten an apology from you yet. And still you ask for me to『Go out with you』…!" (Daichi)

"… Ah." (Shuri)

With Katsuragi-kun saying that, that thought finally spread through me.

Because I was accustomed to life in Rostalgia, I behaved like this with Katsuragi-kun from the start.

That's right… Katsuragi-kun has a reason to have a grudge against me…

I realized my foolishness.

… Come to think of it, I… Even now, back there, I still haven't apologized to Katsuragi-kun for that…

Despite that he likes me, something like love… I'm so foolish.

… Then maybe, the important thing Nanamin was talking about was an『Apology』.

“Oi.” (Daichi)

“… Ah, yes.” (Shuri)

“If you’re done with what you wanted, can I go back?” (Daichi)

“Y-yeah. Sorry, I’ve troubled you…” (Shuri)

“It doesn’t matter now… Ah, if you really love me, don’t go telling anyone about this confession. It would needlessly make them mad.” (Daichi)

Announcing that, he left the roof. Only the silence of a miserable woman sobbing in the scarlet evening sun remained.

Chapter 25 -『*Not Number One*』

"… … Ah." (Shuri)

The scenery shined brightly and disappeared, a brutal black wall surrounded me.

Again, I've come back to this place.

I failed for the second time.

『… Although I expected as much, you aren't number one, Shuri.』(Lily)

Lily's voice resounded through the space I was at. Her words pierced my chest like an arrow.

"… What do you mean?" (Shuri)

Barely, the words came out of my mouth. They were towards Lily's remark.

"As expected, you say… what do you mean?" (Shuri)

『You do not love Hero-sama, you are taking advantage of Hero-sama's love.』(Lily)

I don't… love Katsuragi-kun?

I'm taking advantage of Katsuragi-kun's love?

I don't understand what she's implying. There was a question mark floating over my head.

Lily saw my appearance, and with a big sigh seemed to be genuinely amazed.

『What do you learn from this trial?』 (Lily)

I looked back on my memories from the trial. It went without saying. She was probably going to say the main cause of my failure.

“I didn’t… apologize to Katsuragi-kun.” (Shuri)

『That’s right. That’s taking Hero-sama’s love for granted.』(Lily)

“… … … –“ (Shuri)

I bit my lips. Because it was as Lily said.

Because I didn’t do the thing that, if I liked Katsuragi-kun more than anyone else, should have been done before anyone else.

Because Katsuragi-kun loves me.

Without noticing it, what happened long ago had been vanishing from my mind

However, he would surely remember it crystal clear. He said nothing because he loves me.

I’ve certainly been taking Katsuragi-kun’s love for granted.

『… It seems you’ve understood.』(Lily)

“Yeah… However, it’s absolutely impossible that I don’t love him. The feelings I have are real.” (Shuri)

『If that’s so, answer my question. Alright?』 (Lily)

Lily's voice was provocative.

It's alright. There's no need to be anxious. I mean, I love Katsuragi-kun without a doubt.

『What is Hero-sama's favorite food?』 (Lily)

… … Favorite food?

A question that simplistic was anticlimactic. I immediately looked through my memories, trying to recall him eating.

What kind of food did he want to eat in my memories…

… Huh?

Come to think of it, Katsuragi-kun's favorite food… what is it?

Any time we went to eat he would say it was "delicious", and I was satisfied…

I didn't hear it. I've never heard of something like Katsuragi-kun's favorite food.

Seeing me begin to panic with no responses, Lily began to speak.

『Do you understand? You don't even know such a simple thing. And yet you dare say that you love Hero-sama.』 (Lily)

"Y-you're wrong! Even so, Yui-chan and Hayase-san…!" (Shuri)

Denying how she guessed right, I responded immediately.

The thing I just did was attack another person, a disgusting act.

『Unfortunately… those two know Hero-sama's preference. Fuuko found it out during her trial. Shield seemed to know it from before.』 (Lily)

"No way…" (Shuri)

In other words, two people did the trial better than me.

Yui-chan aside, Hayase-san…?

"… … Ah." (Shuri)

Then, I realized that she did something that I couldn't. She apologized.

She diligently confessed her crime.

『Would you like me to tell you? How shield passed the test? 』 (Lily)

"T-that's not needed." (Shuri)

『Shield didn't abandon Hero-sama at the start.』 (Lily)

I abandoned him. It was for the future.

『After that, she opened Hero-sama's closed mind. Day after day, she endured her pained heart, never giving up. She used common sense on Hero-sama to accomplish it.』 (Lily)

Did I ever think about doing that? I was mistaken to think that I could improve my relationship with Katsuragi-kun just by talking with him.

『Then, in the end she fulfilled Hero-sama's wished. She had him win against Hero-sama's hated enemy.』 (Lily)

"T-that's a lie! You're lying!" (Shuri)

『Shield passed because it is the truth. Shouldn't you admit your irresponsibility?』 (Lily)

"W-what are…" (Shuri)

『The Shield, Tamaki Yuina, now deserves to be with him more—』 (Lily)

"—Stop iiiit!!" (Shuri)

I shouted to interrupt her.

My head was confused.

Katsuragi's smiling face floated away and disappeared like bubbles.

そして、勝手に妄想が描きあげていく最悪の結末。彼の向ける笑顔の先には私じゃなくて――。

Now, my delusions involuntarily came up with the worst conclusion. The one he's smiling at is not me—

"Ah… ahh…" (Shuri)

I lost my strength, and leaned against the wall.

I, I—

"… What have I been doing up till now…?" (Shuri)

I unconsciously spoke.

The energy that I had for this trial till now—was gone.

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I was in the Scorching Execution Ground that was not the illusion that Lily created.

"… Well, I wonder if those two are…" (Tamaki)

After successfully passing the two trials I wasn't calm and waited for the other two's results restlessly.

"Well, you'll have to wait a bit longer. Since there's a bit more till they're done." (Lily)

Reacting to my monologue, Lily Shuraham looked at the crystal ball in front of her. She seems to have been monitoring our movements using that. Touching the crystal ball, she could talk to us using that.

As for that… although I defeated her with the crystal stone, she was uninjured.

What she said in the second trial was an outright lie. According to Lily, it would be foolish to wound our valuable war potential.

"What is it? Are you still angry from a while ago?" (Lily)

"… Not particularly. I also didn't want my body to be wounded…" (Tamaki)

"Then, isn't that fine? Besides, that speech was cool." (Lily)

Lily struck a pose, mimicking me in the second trial.

"Because I am the shield that protects him…!" (Lily)

"Aaaaaah! Quit it, you're embarrassing me! Stop it with that look!!" (Tamaki)

I hid my embarrassed face with my hands. It was easy to imagine Lily's grinning face.

"W-what's with these two!? Right now, what are those two feeling!?" (Lily)

"… Ah, those two?" (Tamaki)

Though I the conversation topic switched, I noticed the atmosphere changed.

The reason was definitely Lily.

"One person seems to be slowly clearing the second trial. The other person is… not so good. She's completely lost her will to fight." (Lily)

As a result I couldn't conceal my surprise. One of them was abandoning the Katsuragi LOVE trial.

I'm sure there must be a compelling reason.

"Lost her will to fight… what in the world happened?" (Tamaki)

"… No, it's just… Because that child was a bit blinded, she misunderstood something for feeling love. She accepted it, and though I wanted her to recover…" (Lily)

"… Lily did what? Isn't that foul play?" (Tamaki)

"I was going to support her in the end… Did I mistake the timing?" (Lily)

Lily scratched her hairy head.

"… … … …" (Tamaki)

From the way she talked and from her behavior… I have a rough idea who lost their will.

… No, there's no way…

"Hey… she finished." (Lily)

As Lily said that, the crystal ball cracked. Dazzling light shot out at that time.

"Kyaa-!?" (Fuuko)

The first to appear was that red-eyed girl, Hayase-san. The girl who rushed out fell on her bottom.

"Good work, Hayase-san." (Tamaki)

I helped her stand up by pulling her hand. Saying words of appreciation, I tapped her shoulder with a *PonPon*.

"Tamaki-san also did good work." (Fuuko)

"Then… that means?" (Tamaki)

"Yes! I also passed!" (Fuuko)

Hayase said with a smile. With this, the dropout was decided.

In other words, Shuri-chan…

"… What happened?" (Hayase)

"… … … Ah, no. Nothing." (Tamaki)

It seems that it showed on my face. Hayase-san, who didn't know the circumstances, tilted her head to the side. I hesitated and sidestepped by changing the topic.

"Leaving that aside… how did Hayase-san clear it?" (Tamaki)

"Eh? Fufu, well—" (Fuuko)

Hayase-san smiled at me and told me the method she used to broke through.

"First of all, I confined Katsuragi-kun in his dorm room—" (Fuuko)

"Yeah, you don't have to say any more because I get it already! Rather, did you seriously do that!?" (Tamaki)

"Wasn't it an obvious joke? I, unlike you guys, was already on good terms with Katsuragi-kun and got along with him normally. Ah… it would be good if that was reality… ehe, ehehe…" (Fuuko)

Ah… that's bad… her consciousness was going on a trip.

I suddenly became tired. Haah, I sighed.

And then, there was another cracking sound from the crystal ball behind us and more light appeared.

Did Shuri-chan finish…? Or…

… Well, even if that was the result, it was just a game so it didn't matter.

Shuri's love wasn't so fragile that it would shake from something like this.

That's right! I will comfort my best friend!

I turned around thinking that.

“Shuri-chan…?” (Tamaki)

I had an uncomfortable feeling.

Shuri-chan’s pupils showed what she felt.

Her pupils were ominously clouded.

Chapter 26 - 『*Starting Fresh*』

Everyone is safe… though it's hard to say for us who just finished the trial, we are going down a gloomy path.

Lily's magic light lead the way with a shining light.

We were lined up behind Lily in the order of me, Shuri-chan, and then Hayase-san.

I was leading Shuri-chan by her hand. Or else she seemed as though she may disappear.

"Shuri-chan…?" (Tamaki)

I called Shuri-chan's name to check on her.

"… … …" (Shuri)

There was no reply. It felt like she was an empty container that lost its soul.

"… … Hmph…" (Lily)

From the related party that did this to her, Lily was giving Shuri-chan a sidelong glance.

Her gaze held astonishment and sympathy.

"… Hey, Lily. Where are we heading?" (Tamaki)

Shuri-chan definitely needs Katsuragi now. If we don't have him, Shuri-chan won't get better.

"… Where is Katsuragi? Since we passed, will you tell us where he is?" (Tamaki)

"… Don't worry, Shield. I've also thought about that." (Lily)

"… What do you mean?" (Tamaki)

"Something like… this!" (Lily)

Lily withdrew from the front and light filled my vision.

What appeared was a transfer magic formation. In the very center of it an unknown man, Katsuragi and Leadred were sitting down.

"Katsuragi! Leadred-san too!" (Tamaki)

『… … …』 (Katsuragi, Leadred)

Though I called their names, they didn't seem to notice that us three arrived, and were staring at something.

"… What are you looking at?" (Tamaki)

I approached quietly and, looking from behind them, saw that they were looking into three crystal balls.

"… Crystal balls? Why are they here?" (Tamaki)

I had doubts about them incongruously being in this place. Lily gave the answer.

“Oh, those, it’s because Hero-sama’s group was watching them like me.” (Lily)

“Oh, I see. Then…” (Tamaki)

… … … Hmm?

Katsuragi was also… watching…?

The trials?

What I had done in the trial rapidly flashed through my mind.

『Therefore… because of that, right now, would you warm me up…?』

Me, who who pleaded for him to embrace me.

『Even if you fail here, it’s alright because I will never leave Kasturagi.』

Me, who made a proposal-like remark and clung to him from behind.

『I love you, Katsuragi～… I have… always loved you…!!』

Me, who confessed my love.

“Nnn…” (Tamaki)

“Nnn?” (Lily)

“Noooooooooo!!” (Tamaki)

Sure enough, I wasn’t able to endure the shame and screamed.

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The transfer room. The so-called goal of the dungeon. I ended up here a few hours ago, though I'll be omitting various things that happened for now.

I was busy keeping Tamaki, who let out a loud scream a moment ago, company after bringing her close.

"W-wait a minute! T-then, Katsuragi saw all of our trials?" (Tamaki)

Hearing Lily telling her, Tamaki asked me that question first.

We were certainly watching them at the school, and then fighting Lily.

"… Well, yeah." (Daichi)

"N-no way…" (Tamaki)

Tamaki weakly sat down when I said that. Her face became so red that it wouldn't lose to an octopus, and she was hiding it with her hands.

"Eh, then, everything, you saw, eh, eh!? (Fuuko)

Fuuko started to lose her composure and was becoming flustered. She was also sweating. For some reason she diverted her gaze from me with all her might.

"… … …" (Shuri)

However, the girl who liked me more than anyone—wore a heartless expression.

To be precise, her eyes felt like they had no vitality and appeared dead.

Hell, nightmares, despair, looking at her face like that was painful.

Each of the three had different reactions.

First of all, the one to speak first was Fuuko.

“T-that’s not it, Katsuragi-kun! F-from my position, I had no choice but to say… that…” (Fuuko)

“Don’t worry about it, Fuuko.” (Daichi)

“… … Eh?” (Fuuko)

“Since the reason you did that was because you like me right? I’m not used to being loved. I’m just really happy.” (Daichi)

“K-Katsuragi-kun…!” (Fuuko)

Saying that, I clapped Fuuko’s shoulder with a *Pon*. She had on an entranced expression. It seems that her consciousness had taking a trip somewhere.

Next I went to the one who did the most in the trial, who was the first girl to return from it.

“… T-Tamaki.” (Daichi)

“… W-what?” (Tamaki)

“Umm…” (Daichi)

“… …” (Tamaki)

I wonder what I should say? Though I had suspected she held good will towards me for a long time, I didn’t think her feelings were that intense until she was put in there.

She is also a gentle child who loves me. I have to respond cordially.

… … … Alright.

“Tama—“ (Daichi)

“Daichi.” (Tamaki)

My name came from her before her name was called. Tamaki whispered into my ear with blushing cheeks. The distance was close enough to feel her breath.

“… Since I’m good for now… Shuri-chan needs you. Help her somehow…” (Tamaki)

Saying just that, Tamaki, as if to encourage me, clapped my back and went besides Leadred.

However, to the simple me it was motivation enough and I turned my feet towards the girl in question.

“… Shuri…” (Daichi)

“Katsuragi… …-kun.” (Shuri)

When Shuri saw my face approaching, she muttered my name.

Apparently she hadn’t noticed me until I approached her.

“… Katsuragi-kun.” (Shuri)

“That’s right, is something wrong?” (Daichi)

“Katsuragi-kun.” (Shuri)

She touched from my arm, to my body and moved her hand up to my cheek.

“Ahaha, it’s Katsuragi-kun. It’s Katsuragi-kun.” (Shuri)

Her clouded eyes saw me.

Something happened to her… it must be related to that trial. Shuri only failed twice, though after that she didn’t return to the academy even once.

“Shuri…” (Daichi)

“As I thought… How pleasant, being called by name. I know, can I also… call you by first name? D-Daichi… Ehehe… It’s embarrassing. Since I’m not adding ‘-sama’, it’s somehow fresh!” (Shuri)

“… …!” (Daichi)

I sense madness.

If those words were Shuri’s true feelings, how happy must she be. She seemed so happy she, was going to faint.

However, right now Shuri is going mad. It’s abnormal.

“Hey, Daichi. I, was working hard in the trial you know. I even killed Samejima, to save Daichi… But you know, you know, Daichi ran away? Sure, it was because you were embarrassed because you liked me. I mean, Daichi is strong and would never run away from me. I’ve kissed Daichi time and time again, something… that’s happened… Which reminds me how many children shall we have? Of course I want to give birth as proof of my love for Daichi… I want at least three… Daichi can decide the names, I’m not good at things like that. Ah, I’ve gone off topic… Though I said that, I don’t mind. I know Daichi likes me. I like Daichi the most in the world, since I love him. Right? Isn’t that right? Say you love me, Daichi? Because I worked hard for that. Say it? Say it, Daichi. Say that you love me…?” (Shuri)

She changed from sorrow to smiling. She was begging and gripping my arm, digging her fingernails into it.

… I know that the words I should say are none other than 『I like you』.

I understand how dangerous her current condition is.

However, I know that if I were to do that, she'd become an empty lifeless doll.

Since we've had a mutually fondness until now, I've been putting off the bill to resolve this and make her better. I wonder if I'm being punished in a sense.

That's why, I must send her the opposite words.

We have to face each other.

"… I hate it." (Daichi)

"… … …" (Shuri)

"The Shuri right now, I hate." (Daichi)

I clearly stare at her eyes and announce it plainly.

"Eh-… Ah-… Uwah-…" (Shuri)

Shuri couldn't believe the scene in front of her and tried to run away. However, it was kind of easy to predict that. I used『Earth Chain Binding』, seizing her feet.

Shuri lost her balance and hit the ground with her face. I took her hand, and immediately embraced her closely when she got up.

“W-what are—“ (Shuri)

“… But you know. It’s my idiotic self that i hate even more.” (Daichi)

“… …!” (Shuri)

I applied more force to my arms.

“I… when I kissed you back in the first dungeon… that wasn’t because I liked you.” (Daichi)

“… Eh-…” (Shuri)

“I was going to use you and throw you away when you got in the way… I was going to. However, I gradually noticed Shuri’s merits… truly. I came to love that Shuri.” (Daichi)

I don’t know what kind of face Shuri has on. There’s a possibility that she disliked it.

However, I continued.

Because I thought that we need to get to know each other even more now.

“When Shuri confessed to me in front of the Royal Palace I was very happy. I have to protect Shuri, is what I thought. At the same time I became afraid of losing you. I was desperate to not be disliked by Shuri. I didn’t want to show you my ugly side, nor know about it. Therefore, I didn’t tell Shuri how I felt about my past… Sorry, Shuri. I’m the lowest—“ (Daichi)

“—You’re wrong!!” (Shuri)

Interrupting my apology, Shuri voiced her denial.

“Katsuragi-kun is… that is… I’ve probably been taking advantage of that since the beginning…? Although I was shocked, such a silly me received goodwill, compared to being protected so many times… If it weren’t for Katsuragi-kun, I wouldn’t be here right now. Therefore, Katsuragi-kun isn’t the lowest. I… I’m—“ (Shuri)

Now, sobs were mixing in with her words, and her words firmly reached my heart.

“SOWWYYYYY!!” (Shuri)

It’s the first time such a loud voice came from Shuri’s mouth. Knowing the extent of her feelings, I could surmise the meaning of her words.

“I also… I also… didn’t try to get to know Katsuragi-kun! I became too dependent! On Katsuragi-kun’s kindness!” (Shuri)

“… …” (Daichi)

“I was wrong… I was stupid! I fell in love with Katsuragi-kun, and Katsuragi-kun also fell in love with me… I was ecstatic…! I didn’t take you into consideration until someone told me!” (Shuri)

“… …” (Daichi)

“You’re favorite food, favorite color, favorite hobby… I really don’t know anything… While I kept saying that I love you, I didn’t even try to meet you halfway! And yet I wanted Katsuragi-kun to love me, I’m such a hopeless idiot…! And above all, I! I ran away from my crime… I’m sorry! Although it is late, for speaking bad about Katsuragi-kun, for the bullying, for not helping you… I’m really sorry!!” (Shuri)

… Shuri continued on with her really, really long apology. I understood the feelings of her words one by one.

… We knew so little of each other. I think we had gotten too drunk on words of 『Love』. We probably longed for each other after having gone through too much shock.

… However, while that's true, my feelings right now aren't temporary, nor are they fake. I seriously love Shuri.

"… Resist if you don't like it." (Daichi)

"… There's no way I would do that." (Shuri)

Now that I had her permission, I embraced her gently.

"Thank you, Shuri. For seriously apologizing…" (Daichi)

"… No, because I was in the wrong." (Shuri)

"Although I don't mind anymore… ah, no. Let's stop this topic already. Let's talk about the future from now on." (Daichi)

"… The future?" (Shuri)

"Yeah, that's right. Talk about the future." (Daichi)

I gently stroked Shuri's head. She seemed comfortable and smiled with her whole face.

I think that she calmed down a little. Therefore, I decided to speak about what I was thinking.

"I love Shuri. Because I love you… once more, shall we try to start over from being friends?" (Daichi)

"… I-I knew it, someone like me…" (Shuri)

Shuri's shoulders trembled at my words, and she sent me an uneasy look.

"It's different. Didn't I tell you already? I love Shuri after all." (Daichi)

"Then… why?" (Shuri)

Unconciously, I increased the force in my arms. She had truly told me her feelings.

"It's like Shuri said. Shuri hardly knows me. However, the same can be said for me." (Daichi)

"… Is that… so?" (Shuri)

"Don't you agree that I've always left it to Shuri took cook, and to pick my clothes, and evaded topics that had to do with the previous world? Therefore, I think that this is a good opportunity to understand each other better. We'll start properly from scratch, become friends, and deepen our relationship—from there, we'll move on to love." (Daichi)

"… I wonder if it will go that smoothly?" (Shuri)

"It will. I mean, we didn't even know anything about each other, only that we dearly love each other." (Daichi)

"—" (Shuri)

"Though it should be obvious already… does Shuri hate me?" (Daichi)

"N-no!" (Shuri)

Shuri shook her head left and right. Because it was done so frantically, I let out a laugh.

"W-why are you laughing!?" (Shuri)

“I couldn’t endure it because Shuri was so cute.” (Daichi)

“C-come on…” (Shuri)

Shuri’s cheeks puffed up. That action was lovely, and from the bottom of my heart I was amazed by her, I knew that I loved her.

“Well then, first of all… That’s right, self-introductions huh.” (Daichi)

I stretched out my hand.

“I’m Katsuragi Daichi. I like reading and playing games.” (Daichi)

“I’m Hamakaze Shuri. My hobby is cooking and my strong point is fried rice! My belief is to always have on a smile! … Nice to meet you!” (Shuri)

Shuri was innocent as usual, and returned my grip with a big smile.

Chapter 27 - 『*To Hell*』

On the transfer magic formation, me, Shuri, Shield, Lily, Lily's Husband, and Fuuko sat in a circle.

"The Third Hero Revenge Strategy Meeting!" (Daichi)

When I said the title, everyone clapped in applause. I think it's unusual for a hero to have such hostile private affairs like this.

"Well, however, we should have a self-introduction before that. Lily's Husband." (Daichi)

"Yes." (Lily's Husband)

Lily's Husband raised his hand when I brought it up and began to introduce himself.

"My name is Yuuma Shuraham. As you know, I am Lily Shuraham's husband. —In the world you guys are from, my name was Yuuba Yuuma." (Yuuma)

『… … … Eh?』

Those three solidified.

Oh, that's a good expression. I had a similar reaction when I was first told.

I laughed with a *Kukku*.

"… Umm, t-then that means… that Lily-san's husband is—" (Fuuko)

“Yeah. He’s from the same world’s inhabitants as you guys, Claria brought him here.” (Lily)

Accepting Fuuko’s question, Lily clarified his identity. The three’s patience was finally unable to last from the truly surprising information that was told to them.

『Huuuh-!?』

They forgot to use words, showing the extent of their shock.

◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆◇◆

It was when the Demon Goddess Messiah-sama and that fucking woman Claria were at the height of competing for this world.

In contrast to Messiah’s army of demons, Claria’s humans—residents of your world were transferred here and tossed into the battle front as soldiers.

Yuuma and I were included in the soldiers.

You can think that the situation was the same as now. Incidentally, Yuuma and I were lovers back then.

Of course, Yuuma and I were given powers to fight with our lives just like you guys. However, Yuuma was injured on the battlefield, and was on the brink of death.

Therefore, I begged Claria. I begged her to return Yuuma back to the base.

Then, that person said that『We should abandon those have no use』.

My mind blanked.

Hadn't we continuously fought for the sake of this person?

I hated her. I thought to kill her with my own hands. But, I didn't have the strength.

Moreover, we were in the middle of enemy territory.

I couldn't expect any aid.

I despaired. Would I lose my beloved one?

And then I was saved by Messiah-sama. Fortunately Yuuma survived, and I agreed to—well, because of that I have such a body, but above all Yuuma is alive. That much was enough for me.

Because of that, we joined Messiah-sama's faction and were individually sealed here… And now, here we are at the present.

"… And that is why, it's fine… hey, why are you all crying?" (Lily)

Listening to Lily's story, Tamaki, Shuri, and Fuuko were crying.

"B-because…" (—)

"Lily-san's past, it's heart-breaking…" (—)

The three wiped dry their tears with towels they were holding. Lily had an embarrassed expression since she didn't expect this kind of a reaction.

"Oh, therefore, I have no regrets, rather I don't mind because I'm happy being with Yuuma… I don't know what to say, these children… Other than that, listen up! Return to the story, Hero-sama!" (Lily)

Receiving the rough pass from the blushing Lily, I continued the story. Everyone changed their focus to me.

"… Well, I also want to put off hearing it. Time is precious right now." (Daichi)

It was Fuuko that reacted to my words first.

"What do you mean?" (Fuuko)

"Ah, when everyone was undergoing the trial I received help from Yuuma by continuously observing Samejima. Right now, he is fighting against the 30thFloor's boss in the stairs room… When the boss is defeated, the transfer magic formation that leads to the bottom floor will appear. Even though I've already called this a strategy meeting… you understand right?" (Daichi)
[TN: Samejima is read as "Trash"]

Although no one responded to my question, by their expressions and gestures, they've responded properly.

One gave a smile, one gave a shrug, one nodded, and another licked their lips.

"Yuuma and I are prepared for the worst case scenario… Besides, Hero-sama also has personal affairs to attend to." (Lily)

"Don't worry. Enjoy your marriage, it's been a while." (Daichi)

"I'll do just that." (Lily)

Lily threw her arms around Yuuma and said so. Showing off, this fellow.

Me too… that's right. I have much to do after this fight.

The matter with Shuri, the future with Tamaki, and dealing Fuuko.

All of it, all of it. I will give it my all.

… Well, here we go.

“—Shall we go and hunt a Hero?” (Daichi)

For a long time, I’ve been watching this revenge play out in my dreams.

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“… What’s that magic formation…?” (Samejima)

I was perplexed by seeing the pattern I’ve never seen before after defeating the monster I thought was the boss. The one in【Rigal’s Den】wasn’t like this.

Sajima approached the magic formation as if she had an inkling and nodded with a “hmm, hmm” as if she had confirmed something, but that too came to an end and she came back to us who had safely defeated the boss and were resting.

“Did you figure something out?” (Kijima)

Next to her, Kijima asked with his breath rising. Sajima smiled and laughed.

“It’s a transfer magic formation. Exactly like the one I saw in the book from the Royal Palace. Since there aren’t anything like stairs here, I wonder if it brings us down?” (Sajima)

“It’s possible this isn’t the stairs room?” (Kijima)

“I think it isn’t. I mean, the opponent was only that strong.” (Sajima)

“That’s also right…” (Kijima)

Kijima nodded, convinced.

The boss we were fighting until a moment ago excelled in swordplay. We somehow managed to attack it simultaneously, and were able to finally kill it.

“It would have been troublesome if it could recover.” (Kijima)

“Something like that wouldn’t happen. If it’s Hero-sama, it’ll be alright.” (Arianne)

Arianne objected to Kijima. Although this person has been supporting me, recently she’s been clinging to me and has been noisy.

Once I capture this dungeon it’s goodbye. On that topic, Selen has been easy because she’s reserved and I’ll continue to advance my relationship with her.

I’ll cast away unnecessary people. It is the natural right of those who stand above others.

After that a few minutes passed as we checked our status and had a strategy meeting.

“… We’ll go soon ‘kay?” (Samejima)

I called out to each member and set up ranks and preparing weapons. Of course, I was in the lead position.

The magic formation was in front of me. I don’t know what awaits us after passing through it.

However, it is possible to predict it to some degree after hearing Sajima’s story. In the worst case situation, there would be a demon king, but that should not be a problem if we face it with caution.

More than anything… I want to have my wish granted quickly.

No matter who I have to sacrifice.

Even if it's another classmate.

Phew, letting out a single breath, with sword in hand, and magic already prepared for the enemy.

"… Alright, let's go then, you guys!! Let's kill the demon king!" (Samejima)

『Yeah!!』

We jumped into the magic formation and shouted the usual cheer.

We didn't know that it was connected to the hell that contained the revenge of the demon king.

Chapter 28 - 『*Revenge*』

“O…kay!” (Samejima)

We arrived in a simple room after passing through the transfer magic formation. The ocher walls monotonously wrapped around us. Though unlike the room before this, it is strangely bright.

That was my first impression.

“No wa-!?” (—)

“Kya-“ (—)

“Hya-“ (—)

“…Mu-“ (—)

Judging from the voices, everyone is safe from the transfer.

“You don’t have time to fall on your backsides. Straighten yourselv—” (Samejima)

Everyone began reacting to me getting them into formation—before a familiar voice interrupted.

“Ah! Nanami~n!!” (Tamaki)

“—Eh?” (Sajima)

Sajima suddenly saw the person who called her. Everyone's eyes, including mine, were caught by the girl over there.

It was an unexpected person. An acquaintance. It was the class chairman, Tamaki, waiving her hand.

… Why is that person here? Tamaki should be capturing the【Labyrinth of the Sleeping Trance】, different from us.

… No way, has she already finished it? In that case is Hayase here with Umahara and Minamoto?

Sajima had a personality that would not doubt her close friend and ran over to Tamaki's position.

"Yui-cha~n!" (Nanami)

"Nanami~n!" (Tamaki)

They embraced each other in tears. Tamaki was the same as always.

"Nanamin, are you alright?" (Tamaki)

"Yeah. Yui-chan though, why are you here?" (Nanami)

"Even I don't know. While we were looking for the dungeon's traps… although we knew it was a magic formation, we were caught in it, and everyone was scattered apart… I was so lo~nely!" (Tamaki)

Her story made sense. Maybe I suspected too much.

Seeing the two like that put me at ease, and Kijima also joined in on the conversation.

However, were caught off guard. Both Kijima and I. We didn't notice at all.

“… … Goho-… …?” (Kijima)

An ice spear protruded from Kijima’s body. Tamaki had on a fake smile and muttered.

“That guy is first huh…” (Tamaki)

“—Sajima! Hurry to Kijima!” (Samejima)

I called to get her back immediately, but she had already fainted. There was a woman with crimson eyes next to her with her hand used like a sword.

I saw a man appear from the interior glaring at us with white eyes, and unlike a moment ago his face bloomed with a smile.

“As told, we neutralized them!” (—)

“Thank you, good work.” (—)

“I-it was nothing…” (—)

When the man stroked her head, her face melted in happiness.

The man looked at Kijima collapsed at his feet, still penetrated by the ice spear, and lifted the corners of his mouth in a smile.

I realized it.

“Now, the stage is set. Let’s raise the curtain—on the once in a lifetime, Big Revenge Play.” (—)

This guy is truly the demon king.

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I laughed loudly in my heart. It was due to Samejima's stiffened face.

He did not have his usual composure of looking down on others. Right now, he was probably feeling danger to his life for the first time ever.

I looked down on him to the point that he was frightened. Though only my outward appearance had changed.

It couldn't be helped that my laughter didn't stop. However, this wasn't the time to be immersed in memories.

"Tamaki, Leadred. Each of you capture a small fry. Don't kill them. I don't mind if you punish them so much that they wish to die, though. Fuuko, bind Kijima with your magic. If he puts up resistance, it's fine to erase him. Shuri… let's beat this guy into despair." (Daichi)

Informing each of them with the strategy beforehand, they began to move immediately.

"Tch-. Arianne, Selen! Scatter! Crush them!" (Samejima)

"Got it!" "Understood!"

Samejima issued opposing instructions.

That guy's an idiot. He overestimated his ability and thought it was better than ours.

Leadred went to the Pink Hair, Tamaki the Chibi. It's probably impossible that those two would lose to them.

They were reliable.

I can be at ease focus on killing this guy.

“… I have to congratulate you for being my opponent, Samejima.” (Daichi)

When I called out his name, Samejima’s caution increased further. Shock mixed with fear on his face.

“How do you know my name!?” (Samejima)

“Isn’t it because you killed us?” (Shuri)

All of a sudden, Shuri made an appearance from behind me.

“H-H-Hamakaze? It’s a lie, Hamakaze died!” (Samejima)

“Yeah, that’s right. I was discarded and killed, by you.” (Shuri)

“I-if that’s the case! You’re a fake! Damnit! All of this, is it a trap roo-!?” (Samejima)

Samejima tried to escape from the crime and reality so I struck his cheek hard.

He was blown away at an incredible speed, and hit the wall in the blink of an eye.

“Face reality, idiot.” (Daichi)

Shuri approached Samejima and crouched near him. She pulled his hair and, again, pushed his face into the wall.

“Gobobe-…!” (Samejima)

“… Well then, you’re going to need plastic surgery for your face now… Should I tell you our true identity now? Because you grumbled something about Shuri being a fake, let’s sear this into your memory. Open.” (Daichi)

The letters spelling out Katsuragi Daichi were definitely there. Under that was also Hamakaze Shuri, and Tamaki Yuina who this guy knew the name of, in a row.

Samejima's eyes opened wide. His mouth opened and closed when he looked at me.

I returned it with as brutal a smile as possible.

"You're… that Katsurag-!!" (Samejima)

I hit his face again. It felt like I broke his nose.

"Do you think that way of speaking is ok? Don't you understand your situation?" (Daichi)

"… Don't fuck with me, I can win against garbage like you. Starlight—" (Samejima)

"Do you think I'd let you do something like that?" (Shuri)

Shuri kicked his jaw up. Samejima's chant was interrupted, and naturally the magic was not activated.

"… It's not necessary for you to learn the difference in our strength from only one bout… Taste my power now." (Daichi)

Hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hit.

I punched Samejima's face, condensed into an interval of one minute.

"Higi-!?" (Samejima)

Every time I raised my fist, Samejima's face distorted in fear. It excited my sadistic heart.

“Isn’t it very pleasant? Since we are at it, let’s try having you making me enjoy it even more.” (Daichi)

I grabbed his head, and banged it against the ground. So that he wouldn’t be able to run away, Shuri pierced Samejima’s foot with her dagger.

“Aaaaaaaaaah!!” (Samejima)

“Shut up.” (Daichi)

“Fugu-!?” (Samejima)

I kneed his stomach to silence him.

“… So, trash. Can you say the same thing even in this situation?” (Daichi)

“… M-my comrades will…” (Samejima)

Speaking his last hope with a feeble voice, of course I hadn’t overlooked them.

“Then, should I show you? What happened to the comrades you mentioned?” (Daichi)

I forcibly raised his head to look at the scene that was unfolding.

“Ah… ah…” (Samejima)

Kijima was sewn to the ground in earth chains, Pink Hair had a katana affixed to the base of her neck, and the one in light blue clothes had a knife fixed to her sleeve so that she couldn’t run away.

It seems that she was still conscious, but her clothes were tattered. Her body was injured all over.

She had on a dark expression from the pits of despair, as though she accepted her death. Therefore, I thought that I'd give her a little bit of hope. Even though I said that, it's only a woman.

"Shuri, switch spots with me." (Daichi)

"Ok~ay." (Shuri)

Samejima watched Shuri as I went over to the collapsed people.

"… Oi." (Daichi)

When I let out the low voice, the girls let out a "Hiii". When I drew Pink Hair's jaw towards me, I presented her with an offer. [TN: Not 'hi'. Strong 'e']

"You, name?" (Daichi)

"A-Arianne…" (Arianne)

"And that one over there?" (Daichi)

"S-Selen…" (Arianne)

"Is that so, is that so. Then, Arriane and Selen. I'll give you a chance to live." (Daichi)

""!?"" (Arianne, Selen)

As soon as I said that with a smile, their eyes clearly sparkled.

"I-is that true!?" (Arianne)

"Yeah, I don't lie. However, there is a condition." (Daichi)

“What is it!? I’ll do anything!!” (Arianne)

“P-please tell us!” (Selen)

As though her attitude from the journey was a lie, she accepted the proposal. Selen also agreed.

“Alright, that’s a good girl. You’re already mine. Therefore, make that trash hero feel pain to your heart’s content. Sound good?” (Daichi)

“Y-yes!” (Arianne)

“… Alright.” (Selen)

Arianne and Selen didn’t hesitate. When I had Leadred and Tamaki release the bindings on those two, I brought them to where Samejima was.

“Y-you guys… y-you’re kidding—“ (Samejima)

“… So noisy.” (Selen)

Selen got the ball rolling. She kicked Samejima’s crotch. From there, they let out violence along with abusive language one by one.

『Womanizer!!』

『Lewd!!』

『Tiny dick!!』

『Premature ejaculator!!』

They let out many unbearable words. They broke Samejima’s confidence.

What remained of that guy’s support broke rapidly.

“Hey, look at that, Samejima. These are who you called comrades. No… I wonder if ‘chess pieces’ is more accurate? There’s no difference to you anyways. Were you going to use them and throw them away as well?” (Daichi)

“S-something like that…” (Samejima)

This trash hero seems to have broken mentally and lost his composure, I took his reaction as acknowledgement.

“Did I hit the mark?… Well, after this we can say that there isn’t anyone softhearted enough to save you, but… you reap what you sow!” (Daichi)

I kicked Samejima up so that he could see me place my hands on the hips of these two beautiful women.

They easily entrusted their bodies to me and their faces became lewd.

“Aah.. Aaah…” (Samejima)

It seems that a soundless voice came out.

“Disciplining women is unacceptable, you are trash indeed. This is more suitable for you than a woman!” (Daichi)

“Gi-!!” (Samejima)

I held his head down, striking it against the floor many times. Then, I stamped directly on his foot with all of my strength.

“I wonder if I can also scold you like this. I’ll let you kiss the floor in thanks.” (Daichi)

“S-stop it…” (Samejima)

“I see, I see. You want more.” (Daichi)

I strengthened the force on his leg.

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!” (Samejima)

Samejima’s scream echoed through the room.

“Shut up, you pig. Quiet down for a bit. Tamaki, lend me a knife.” (Daichi)

“It can’t be helped… here.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki threw six knifes in total. Two each to the shoulders, back, and thighs.

“O-ow! S-stop alre—“ (Samejima)

“Tamaki, add another ten.” (Daichi)

“Can I have a present afterward? Because I’m also running low.” (Tamaki)

“I got it. Go, pig.” (Daichi)

He was stabbed by Tamaki’s additions one by one, each loaded thoroughly with hatred. Samejima already started convulsing, and he was leaking urine.

He was too pathetic, so I temporarily crouched down and paid my respects.

“Hahaha! That’s a good expression!” (Daichi)

I scoffed and laughed from the bottom of my stomach.

Skin that has been riddled with cuts. A broken nose, a collapsed cheek, drooping eyelids, and lips that were swelling purple and blue.

There were no traces of his original face.

“P-plea… stop…” (Samejima)

“… Did you stop when I said that? Even once!?” (Daichi)

“I-I won’t do id eber agaib! Pleaze furgib be!!” (Samejima)

“Don’t you understand that it’s too late to say that? You will have the same fate as that guy.—Leadred, kill him.” (Daichi)

“My pleasure.” (Leadred)

“Eh?” (Kijima)

That became Kijima’s last word.

The red oni’s katana swung down on his neck. The body that lost its head spouted blood. The head fell down in the pool of blood with a *Guchari*.

“That guy’s end was disappointing. He was an accessory, after all… just an accessory… Hey, trash… your turn.” (Daichi)

Samejima watched, his whole body trembling and shaking. His complexion was lost, becoming pale and he began to cry.

“Don’t wanna don’t wanna don’t wanna!! Don’t wanna die! Help meeee!!” (Samejima)

He collapsed on the spot, exposing and ugly crying face. Five piercing gazes pierced through him.

“I’b do anyfing you wabt!! Please save me!! Begging you!!” (Samejima)

He had a hilarious expression on while he begged, so I decided to put on an act, and held out my toes towards him.

“Lick these within ten seconds. To be honest, I don’t want to even breathe the same air as you—but, I’ll permit you to.” (Daichi)

“N-no way—“ (Samejima)

“You don’t have time to spare. Eight, seven, six, five—“ (Daichi)

“—I’ll lick them! Please let me lick them!” (Samejima)

With five seconds left, Samejima lowered his head and extended his tongue towards my shoe at full speed.

He began to lick my shoes that were entirely covered in dirt.

… That, that Samejima had completely given in. His pride, his decency, completely cast aside, to the extent that he prostrated himself at my insults.

Disgracefully begging for his life.

Like this, is it also pleasant?

Going to that school, thinking that I would rather die for a year.

Bullying. I was, right now, returning it like this to its ringleader.

I made him kneel.

How long have I waited to see this day come!

… It’s about time to end this.

“Oi, trash. That’s enough.” (Daichi)

“T-then!” (Samejima)

“Yeah, it’s over.—Your life, that is.” (Daichi)

“—E-eh?” (Samejima)

With his hopes dashed, a shadow came over his face.

I drew the sword from my waist and crouched down, piercing Samejima’s back.

“Eh, ah, it hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts!!” (Samejima)

“This is for all you’ve done until now.” (Daichi)

I pulled it out without hesitation and blood vigorously gushed out. Ignoring the surroundings, I severed both arms that were touching the ground.

“O-aguwaaaaaah!?” (Samejima)

“This is for Shuri who suffered because of you.” (Daichi)

Samejima was now only screaming and was unable use recognizable words.

Soon his consciousness would fade.

However, he is absolutely not allowed to die from pain.

I will give him a true death penalty.

“Agaaaauwaaah…!” (Samejima)

Samejima had lost his support and could do nothing but grovel on the ground. While I looked down on such a person, I raised my sword.

“And now, to atone for the sins you have committed—retribution.” (Daichi)

Swinging down the sword without hesitation towards the criminal's neck for a certain kill, I performed the execution.

The face distorted from pain and suffering, full of despair, flew through the air.

Story 3 - Last -『Scorching Execution Ground』

『… Damnit, damnit, damnit!!』 (Samejima)

I cursed and cursed the events that happened until just before dying, scared of the death coming afterwards.

It was stuck in my mind.

The scene of death and pain were linked to me even now.

Piercing through, like gouged meat.

『… Gu-…. Ah…! Hah, hah…!!』(Samejima)

Katsuragi Daichi…!

I was made to do humiliating acts by the guy I bullied in school.

Made to lick his shoes, taking my life in the end.

Do I yield? Impossible.

I am nobler than anyone else, a person to rule others. However, at that time, I bowed down for my valuable life.

Thinking about it annoys me.

Fucking behaving like that…!

Arianne and Selen as well. Giving in to Katsuragi so fucking easily!

Kill him, kill him, kill him, kill him, kill him!

“I’ll absolutely kill that guy!!” (Samejima)

Normally, a loud voice would usually come out.

Why? I was killed by that trash.

My limbs moved. Also, my view was filled with light.

I felt a little uneasy… however, I don’t give a damn right now.

Claria probably resurrected me. Yeah. She’s a god. I’m a hero. She’d be troubled if I weren’t here. It must be like that.

I’m definitely alive.

If it’s like this I can kill that guy…!

“Just wait, Katsuragi…! I’ll definitely kill you…!” (Samejima)

“You haven’t reflected at all? Die.” (—)

“—Hahi-“ (Samejima)

The moment I heard that detestable guy’s voice, I felt something cut into my head and my vision went pitch black.

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“… Killing that guy makes me feel refreshed no matter how many times I kill him after all…” (Daichi)

While I wiped away the blood that was stuck to my sword, I described the thoughts I had looking at the corpse split in two at my feet.

“Well, Katsuragi-sama! That was splendidly done!” (Arianne)

Arriane openly gave me a compliment. Although it didn’t feel bad to be praised, for me she had the position of a Slut.

Since my trust in her is low it’ll probably be necessary to turn her into a slave as well. After Samejima’s execution is finished.

We’re in the bottom room. In other words, we were still in the same place where Samejima was killed.

Lily and Yuuma are with us now as well. Knowing the position of the two hero parties, there was no harm since they wouldn’t pursue this far in.

I asked Shuri and Fuuko to watch Sajima.

“I guess that it was natural that she would come… Then, what now? Explode him next?” (Tamaki)

Lined up next to me, Tamaki proposed the next method to execute Samejima.

She took useless crystal stone out of her bag.

“… I see. Let’s go with that.” (Daichi)

Understanding her intention, I cast the spell to revive Samejima for the second time using the power of『Wight King』.

“To thou, this one now grants a new life. A second life is bestowed. Pledge your oath, and devote one’s self.『Wight Back』” (Daichi)

Light began to converge and began regenerating the body. Although I’ve taken revenge on Samejima with all my strength once, unfortunately just that much did not settle my anger.

So I figured that I'd revive him as a slave and do it again.

At first I thought to make him live his life as low class trash, but since levels go up naturally, he would be able to attack everyone other than me. Though don't think he would stand a chance when ability is considered, there was a chance.

Besides, leaving Claria's favorite person close at hand would just be an uneasy factor.

First of all, since just looking as his face is revolting, I dismissed the idea. Above all, the opposition from the girls was amazing.

"Tamaki. Since the meat scattering around would be troubling, surround him with a wall of ice after he eats this." (Daichi)

"Roger. Here, the crystal stone… Ah, he's reviving." (Tamaki)

"Yeah, then shall we begin?" (Daichi)

I stamped down on the fallen Samejima. Just after reviving and regaining consciousness, Samejima immediately felt pain from the shock and let out a panicked voice.

"K-Katsuragi? Why are you… still here?" (Samejima)

"Because I decided to revive you." (Daichi)

"Ha-!? You can do something like—mugu-!?" (Samejima)

Since his reaction was bothersome again, I closed his mouth after putting a crystal stone into it.

“Understand now? Your life is in my hands. I can kill you at any time. From now on I’ll be enjoying the taste of your fear (full course) to my heart’s content.” (Daichi)

I plainly explained the crystal stone. At the same time, Tamaki jumped back after isolating him in a private room of ice.

“T-take it out! Please take it out!?” (Samejima)

He frantically beat on the ice wall with a cramped look of fear. Immediately after that, that guy’s body burst into pieces.

The walls of ice were covered in blood.

Chunks of meat were spread all round.

Shuri’s group had taken refuge over there. Those girls would not be able to endure this.

Tamaki was amazing for taking that into consideration.

She now had a calm face and collected the pieces of meat together with the ice walls.

“… What? You’re staring.” (Tamaki)

“… No, it’s just that Tamaki is cute and praiseworthy.” (Daichi)

“I-… if I’m going to be Katsuragi’s wife, this much is natural…” (Tamaki)

“… May I embrace you, Tamaki-san?” (Daichi) [TN: Woah. ‘-san’.]

“I-idiot! … When we leave the dungeon.” (Tamaki)

Tamaki started to fiddle with her hair busily, purposely looking away.

What is this cute thing?

However, it's as she said.

I revived Samejima to execute him again.

"Hee-!? S-stop it!! I-I was wrong!" (Samejima)

To Samejima, with the memory of his death still fresh, it seemed that just seeing my face caused a rejection response.

Though I hadn't done anything yet, his face was sloppy with tears and mucus. Without resisting, he prostrated himself. [TN: Dogeza]

I just smiled as usual and stuffed his mouth full on Yanu Leafs.

A large quantity of toxins would spread through the body, eating him from the inside out.

"Ah… no-, baba… ba…" (Samejima) [TN: Gurgling.]

Samejima writhed in agony and fainted, exhausted with bubbles foaming from his mouth.

I repeated the revival and killing after that.

"Ah… please… sto-" (Samejima)

I strangled him with an earth chain.

"I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sor—gapo-!?" (Samejima)

I drowned him using water magic.

"It hurts, please forgive me and stop i—!!" (Samejima)

I used a layer of soil like a vice to crush him to death.

“I don’t… don’t wanna die…” (Samejima)

I killed him with Berserk Tempest.

“S-stop! Stop it stop it stop it stop it—eh-” (Samejima)

I ordered him to commit suicide.

Samejima’s mind was already wearing out, his eyes had become unfocused.

His mouth was half open, but when I approached his body trembled, and he began crying and repenting.

“I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry.” (Samejima)

“Even if you apologize how much of it is true? Next is… to experience the same thing as me. Lily, Yuuma.” (Daichi)

“Yes.” (Lily)

“Leave it to the adults.” (Yuuma)

The two snapped their fingers and Samejima was surrounded with multiple layers of expanding magic formations. When the light burst open, the master of the bottom floor’s demons (servants) suddenly appeared.

“Eh… ah… aah…!” (Samejima)

Of course, I ordered him so that he couldn’t counterattack.

“Guooaaaru!”

The ferocious beasts saw the feast in front of it and drooled a lot.

They couldn’t wait.

They wanted to have it soon.

They wanted to eat.

Those instincts weren’t suppressed and were displayed.

Therefore, I released them.

“Kill him, you guys.” (Daichi)

As though that were the trigger, the beasts tore off of him with their fangs, biting their prey.

“Aaaaaah! Uaauoah!?” (Samejima)

His arms were stretched and he screamed.

It was immediately bitten off, and his voice became tiny.

Bicha, *Guchari*, *BichaBicha*!!

Only chewing sounds were heard.

I revived Samejima again after confirming his death on the status screen.

And then, he became food again.

“Eeyaaauo!?” (Samejima)

Revive him. Become food.

“Ow, owowowow-!!” (Samejima)

Revive. Eaten.

“Death… no… aaaah…” (Samejima)

Revive.

Samejima alone experienced falling into the depths of endlessly being killed.

Let’s make the end of this performance appropriate to this dungeon’s name.

“Earth Layer. Earth Chain Binding.” (Daichi)

Earth chains manifested and fastened to the ground.

I approached, piercing his empty stomach with my sword. I twisted it and punctured the soil layer, boring through the meat and firmly fixing him to the ground like a screw.

“I’m sorry, forgive me because the pain I inflicted on you was wrong please please forgive me.” (Samejima)

“… … …” (Daichi)

I ignored him and continued working. Samejima began to sob.

Do you think you’ll be forgiven by crying?

If it’s like that, I too did cry. Instead of enduring it, I bared my feelings.

Even so, do you, the one who more than anyone else wouldn’t allow me to do that, think that that will help…?

Letting the anger boil and flow out, I began chanting.

“Emperor of Flame. Thou, judge this criminal who committed an evil unto the throne.” (Daichi)

A large amount of magic was poured into the Emperor-class fire magic I heard from Fuuko earlier.

“Burn tremendously, Six Flame Pillars. Intensify and burn all as a wick. Leaving nothing behind that proves there was once life!” (Daichi)

“… Ah… Ah… Ah… Ah.” (Samejima)

With his mind broken into pieces, Samejima who had lost his ego was unable to speak, and was constantly muttering incoherently.

“… This is your true end. Atone and be burned in the fire of hell. –Suicide of Ashes and Dust.” (Daichi)

In that moment, Samejima was surrounded by six flaming pillars and crucified. Before long they united to become one, consuming Samejima.

This scene expresses represents this place the most. It’s exactly a【Scorching Execution Ground】.

His body was carved as he let out agonizing cries. No relief was given. His pain and agony ignored.

“Die and… suffer the pain of death.” (Daichi)

A cry of sorrow echoed.

After making sure he had burned to death, we left.

My revenge is complete.

Story 3 - Another 2 - 『*Repeated Feelings*』

The open, overflowing night sky continued on endlessly. The stars sparkled, and pale moonlight shined on the world. I felt the rustling of the gentle wind across my whole body.

This is definitely outside of the dungeon.

"… Alright, is everyone safe?" (Daichi)

I, who with this have been transferred three times, checked on the safety of my nearby comrades.

"T-that… was my first dungeon clear." (Arianne)

The first to respond was the Slut. That's not it. I wasn't asking you.

"Nothing for me. Everyone else?" (Tamaki)

"Nothing is wrong for me as well." (Leadred)

One by one they announced their safety and for now I was relieved. It seems that the transfer was successful.

"Is Katsuragi-kun also unhurt?" (Fuuko)

"Yeah, there's no problem." (Daichi)

After finishing taking revenge on Samejima, we separated into two groups.

The group that returned to the surface and the group that stayed in the dungeon.

Since we couldn't take the executed Samejima and sleeping Sajima along, we had to bring the Slut to the surface.

So I sorted the best selection of personnel into two groups… Five people, including me, were in the surface group.

Tamaki, Fuuko, and Leadred. Arianne was here as an extra.

Though I wanted the two people who were Sajima's best friends to stay behind and care for her, Lily pushed me into taking Tamaki along. Although Shuri was a probably a little dissatisfied, I wanted to have a small talk with her, just us two without being crowded.

The official reason was that I didn't want to carry the baggage myself, I decided that was good enough.

"Well, being outside after a long time is nice!" (Leadred)

Leadred stretched out her arms to loosen her muscles. She seemed to be bored since she hardly did anything this time.

She'll definitely have a chance to run wild according to the plan, so she'll have to endure for now.

… Well.

"Now then, we'll be behaving different from here on." (Daichi)

Saying that, I split the surface groups further.

Tamaki and I will go to Russell, to retrieve Miare and the luggage left at the inn. Fuuko, Leadred, and Arianne will go to the walled city Gandarosu, with the purpose of buying a house to use as a base.

Numerous demons joined my party, so I decided that I'd passed the limit of concealing them in an inn. Besides, it is unlikely that diving into the next dungeon will be like this one.

So I decided to have Miare also join the party as a safety measure for that.

So, the team was organized with Arianne as the native, Fuuko as the intellectual, and Leadred as the guard.

"I also wanted to go with Katsuragi-kun…" (Fuuko)

Fuuko glued to my body and asked with an upturned gaze.

"Sorry, Fuuko. Because today there is something I have to talk about with Tamaki." (Daichi)

"Yeah, I understand. I just want to say… Sometimes, look at me too please?" (Fuuko)

"… Understood." (Daichi)

Fuuko smiled and went back to Leadred after I said so. The Trash Slut also had something to say but we pretended to not hear her and started to depart for our separate destinations.

After exiting the dungeon, we safely arrived in Russell and had returned to the Inn. We got in contact with Miare at the guild information desk and were to meet with her tomorrow morning.

So, here's the problem. Silence pervaded since we half-understood each other's feelings. It was going good until we sat side by side on the bed. However, we didn't move after that.

I took a fleeting glance at Tamaki, I was nervous and unable to calm down, though having said that I didn't attempt to return to my room. Like that, I was also unable to bring up a subject to talk with her about.

Not only that, my body was filled with a sensation that I was not used to. It was restlessness.

Even the usual retorts came to an end. My mind was blank, and as soon as I calmed down to speak the words would vanish. And now, I've missed the timing.

I wonder what I should say in this kind of a situation.

In such an awkward atmosphere, Tamaki murmured.

"Can I call you… Daichi?" (Tamaki)

Even though I was cornered by the sudden request, I agreed.

Since it wasn't as sudden as I thought.

"Then… I'll also use Yuina." (Daichi)

"O-okay… Daichi." (Tamaki)

"Y-yeah…" (Daichi)

"… …" (Tamaki)

"… … …" (Daichi)

『… … … … …』

The silence returned.

I didn't think this would be so embarrassing. Since I could talk with Shuri without pausing, I couldn't consciously bring up a topic like this.

"… D-Daichi." (Tamaki)

"W-what?" (Daichi)

"U-umm, it's… actually, since Lily wore me out, tonight… she said to enjoy tonight slowly… s-so…" (Tamaki)

The ending was weak, and Yuina's voice was barely audible.

However, I earnestly listened to her and understood what she wanted to say. Therefore, Yuina probably wanted me to say it. Since it's embarrassing.

It would be tasteless to have her say any more. If you understand, show your intentions through your actions.

"Ah…" (Tamaki)

I took Yuina's hand who was next to me and grasped it tightly. It was nice and cool, a good feeling.

"Then… is it okay, Yuina?" (Daichi)

"Y-yeah… Because I've already decided. I want to smile next to Daichi." (Tamaki)

"… I also want to see Yuina's smiling face. I want to monopolize all of you." (Daichi)

“——!!” (Tamaki)

Yuina blushed from ear to ear in the blink of an eye.

It’s a reaction I’ve seen many times, but it’s still cute.

“Sh-… should I take that… as a proposal?” (Tamaki)

“… Is it a good proposal this time?” (Daichi)

“… Should it be a secret again?” (Tamaki)

“… No.” (Daichi)

A replay of some time ago. We both concealed it at the time.

However, this time is different.

I saw that trial, I’m aware of her heart, of her resolution. I wouldn’t have a foolish idea like leaving her.

I wish that we… could spend our lives together.

I couldn’t hold back my feelings for her any longer. I absolutely want to make this woman happy by my hand.

Right, I feel that from the bottom of my heart.

I will convey my feelings.

“I love Yuina.” (Daichi)

I said that and Yuina burst into tears with a happy expression, she wiped away the tears from the corners of her eyes, and finally hid her face with

her hands. I would probably have the same reaction if I were in her position.

It was really amusing. Therefore, I decided to make fun of her.

“Yuina… I gathered my courage to confess but what’s your answer?” (Daichi)

“I-I know that but…!” (Tamaki)

I stared at Yuina from the distance of a finger. I wasn’t afraid at all. In fact, my feelings increased.

“… However, I haven’t heard it firsthand. I only heard it from in the trial.” (Daichi)

“B-because of that you can endure. I’ll die from shame if I say it twice.” (Tamaki)

“I still want to hear it from your mouth.” (Daichi)

“… It’s no good if I don’t say it?” (Tamaki)

I selfishly shook my head at her question. Yuina gathered her determination and turned towards me, unintentionally letting out an “Uwah” at the distance between us.

And then, the feelings she held in her chest were conveyed.

“… I am also… in love with Daichi…” (Tamaki)

They were simple words, but they firmly held one’s irreplaceable pure feelings. I was embarrassed from having her say them, and my temperature suddenly increased.

The returned feelings blew away all words, and my body moved on impulse, embracing Yuina. She also accepted it without disliking it, unlike what I felt back at that time.

"… Love. I love Daichi." (Tamaki)

"I love Yuina." (Daichi)

"Do you love… Shuri-chan more than me?" (Tamaki)

The sudden question put me at a loss for words as I compared the two. Yuina laughed from seeing my face and clapped my back without holding back.

"It's a joke. I know how important that girl is to you. However, could you cherish me the same?" (Tamaki)

"… I promise, even if it costs my life." (Daichi)

"Th-… then, it's fine." (Tamaki)

Yuina embraced me strongly. The usual Yuina would probably have stopped here. However, it is different now. She continued with more words. Our relationship advanced one step further.

However, today… please give me a lot of Daichi's love." (Tamaki)

The second she said that, Yuina closed her eyes. What she wanted to do, of course I understood. Or rather, I don't think there is a guy who would have the self-control to not.

I brought my face near Yuina's face that was dyed red—and pushed her body covered with pure white skin down, hanging over her.

Story 3 - Another 3 - 『*Vessel*』

The intense contest with Yuina continued till daybreak. Although I was a little surprised at how much she knew despite her naivete, there was still a difference in experience. I'd taken the lead.

I became increasingly aware of my greed for Yuina's innocent reactions and her seductive voice, to the point that she scolded me. Even so, we continued until the end.

Because her scolding was adorable.

It was about then that Yuina said it was a good time to rinse off and enter the bath. I also agreed with her since the sweat felt unpleasant. However, I let her go in first on the principle of ladies first.

When I said, "I'll wait for you to finish." She responded with, "What are you talking about? Aren't we going in together?" So now we're both in the bathroom. My mind was on a rampage, after all.

"… So? Does it feel good?" (Tamaki)

Yuina asked for my thoughts on her rubbing my back with a sponge. I definitely did not have a problem with it.

"Y-yeah… H-however, this is…" (Daichi)

"A-at any rate… don't mind it since I've seen it all… Just leave it to me." (Tamaki)

And then, she added more.

“Since I want to do this… be quiet and let me spoil you…” (Tamaki)

Winner: Instincts!

Because he only had a few strands of reasoning remaining right then, his male instincts took the lead and won the battle. It could be said that it was a perfect fight.

“Is this much strength alright?” (Tamaki)

“It’s just right. There are no problems.” (Daichi)

If there had to be a problem, it would be my ‘son’.

That doesn’t mean that we would do something indecent though.

I only came in to the bath in accordance with Yuina’s demands. Indeed, occasionally something soft would brush against my back.

“I thought this earlier but… Daichi’s… is big, huh.” (Tamaki)

… Did she just say something indecent?

This is Yuina we’re talking about here so she probably meant my back. I mean, I have a towel hung on my legs so that she can’t see my front.

… Well, I’ll just enjoy myself for now.

“… ‘Kay, done… Now for the front?” (Tamaki)

“… I think that we should stop here because if you did that the effort we put into getting washed would be pointless, there is also the appointment with Miare. Don’t you agree, Yuina-san?” (Daichi)

“… Your real intention is?” (Tamaki)

“I want to mess you up.” (Daichi)

“So…Your self-control is… no good?” (Tamaki)

Yeah, I had no self-control.

Let’s just say that because of that I couldn’t resist Yuina’s sweet temptation.

After that, we met up with Miare. When she noticed that we had reached that kind of a relationship she teased Yuina like a toy, but that’s for another time.

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We merged with the group of three that had already left the dungeon, and pursued the group that had gone towards Gandarosu.

On the way Miare made Lily’s group look human, and we were also made to look like other people.

So now what was the perpetrator of the only problem in this team? Sajima Nanami, but that was easily resolved.

I told Sajima my identity and my powers, that I killed Samejima, and that I was going to take revenge on the people that were left.

Shuri and Yuina also talked with her to try and persuade her, and it turned out that Sajima accepted it easily and became our comrade.

According to her, she wanted to be with Shuri and Yuina. Samejima’s group suffered the consequences and she didn’t mind.

Everything progressed too smoothly and I found it hard to swallow, but I had no reason to deny her.

I also had her show her actual status screen. Her magic specialization was the almighty Healer. Only, her special ability didn't focus on support.

I asked for Lily and Yuuma's opinion, but they said it wasn't suspicious.

"Please take care of me, Sajima." (Daichi)

"Yeah, if you get hurt leave it to me… At the same time, I'm sorry. I couldn't do anything…" (Nanami)

"Oh, don't worry about it. You never did anything to me… besides, the main culprit is dead." (Daichi)

"Okay… thank you. I'll do my best!" (Nanami)

Sajima Nanami's admission was decided in this way.

Under Lily's guidance, we arrived at Gandarosu after two days. Currently, we were in front of a large mansion after being led by Fuuko from meeting her at the city's entrance.

… Huh? Huh!?

"… Fuuko-san. What is with this mansion?" (Daichi)

I unintentionally stood upright because she secured this imposing property. Even though we have eleven people in all, we'll still probably live without inconvenience.

Three stories. Four rooms on the third floor, with two on the first floor. The second floor is considerably big and is the living area.

"Well, it's… it won't take long to explain so…" (Fuuko)

Fuuko told us that what happened while we weren't here.

First of all she went to find some real estate, and was told “No” when she requested a house for everyone to live in.

However, when Fuuko used『Global Search』, she found that there was a mansion, and it showed why the estate was concealed.

Listening to the reasons, the mansion was abandoned by a millionaire because a demon had settled down here and safety could only be guaranteed outside of its walls, so purchasing the estate was not recommended.

Fuuko immediately began negotiations.

It would be discounted if she drove out the demon. If they accepted the damaged real estate, a cleaning service would definitely be attached.

I could guess the result without hearing it just from seeing the tidy mansion.

“Is that so… Fuuko, you did well.” (Daichi)

“If possible could you caress my head as well… or… is that no good?” (Fuuko)

“That’s easy considering what you’ve done.” (Daichi)

I fulfilled Fuuko’s request and moved my hand to her well-maintained hair. She was smiling happily.

“Then, feel free to go inside!” (Fuuko)

Fuuko cheerfully opened the door, feeling satisfied.

What came into sight was–

“Welcome back, Katsuragi-sama~! I, Arianne, have sincerely awaited your arriva-fu-!?” (Arianne)

–the Bitch in a naked apron.

It couldn’t be helped that I hit her out of reflex from her trying to cling to me.

Annoying. Very annoying.

I can’t describe how annoyed I was.

We bought ingredients with a portion of the money that was planned to buy the house with and held the『Samejima’s Murder Celebration Party』.

Ranks were put aside for today.

Leadred and Lily opened ten bottles. Yuuma was also being a bad drunk and kept the two company. I didn’t think Leadred would be like that, but expected it for Lily.

That’s rare, I thought, as I reached my hand out to the arranged food on the table. The moment I tasted it, a question arose.

It was good. Just from the seasoning I could tell it was different from Shuri’s cooking.

Did Yuina, Fuuko, or Yuuma make it?

No. They were chatting happily.

Then who?

I anxiously shifted my attention from the living room to the attached kitchen.

“Ah, Katsuragi-sama. You’re looking this way… did you run out of food?” (Arianne)

While putting on a sugary voice, the Bitch appeared holding a pan.

You again…!?

I tsukkomi’d in my mind.

Her title changed from Slut to Joke Slut.

“Next time you boast too much, I’ll slap you. How about following Selen’s example a little?” (Daichi)

I compared her to the girl behind her holding a dish, supplying beverages.

“Selen is Selen, I am me. Don’t worry. Rather, Katsuragi-sama! This dish is specialty!! I have confidence in it because I practiced it so that men would fall for me!” (Arianne)

Her reason for practicing was also bullshit. Come on, I’ve never seen someone like this…

However, I’m getting angry that her cooking is seriously delicious. It’s vexing, but I think that I could eat all of it.

I noticed that the nearby foods like fried rice were quickly eaten.

“… Seconds.” (Daichi)

“Yes! Oh, have me as well.” (Arianne)

“I don’t need that!!” (Daichi)

“Ow!?” (Arianne)

I threw my spoon at the Slut who just wouldn't give up. It hit her head splendidly… however, that Joke Slut had ingredients in the frying pan.

The piping hot ingredients flew towards me from the frying pan in her hand because of my attack.

Red, green, and yellow ingredients took flight. They were colorful vegetables. They were definitely heading towards us…

It goes without saying but after that a number of voices shouted out.

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Around the time those in the unlisted house in the neighborhood fell asleep from the merrymaking they had, rough breathing could be heard and stood out from the quiet and deep calm of the night.

A silhouette ran to the dungeon that did not have a lord.

The demons had been ordered to not allow anyone inside, but although they tried to defeat the person they were buried by the overwhelming difference in ability.

Without rest, she did nothing but head towards the bottom floor. For the sake of healing them.

And then, the girl arrived at the transfer magic formation, warping to her destination at once.

"… No abnormalities, alright."

She confirmed that there were no enemies nearby. She ran knowing that she was safe, sitting down in front of a fallen corpse.

Then, the intruder began to heal it.

Of course, it didn't work. At best it only healed the wounded and burned skin. It wasn't revived. This person would have to be a god or something.

"I did it…! Finally… I have a vessel…!"

Though humble, she raised a voice of joy.

That person embraced the corpse of the young man that was killed in revenge.

"With this… I can see you at last. It's been… so long… Oh, how I want to see you soon—"

Then, with a smile that seemed to melt in ecstasy, she muttered.

—Terias-sama.

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